



Paths to Work: The Political Economy of Education and Social Inequality in the United States, 1870-1940

Citation

Groeger, Cristina V. 2017. Paths to Work: The Political Economy of Education and Social Inequality in the United States, 1870-1940. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences.

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Paths to Work: The Political Economy of Education and
Social Inequality in the United States, 1870-1940

A dissertation presented

by

Cristina V. Groeger

to

The Department of History

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

History

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

May 2017

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**Paths to Work: The Political Economy of Education and Social Inequality
in the United States, 1870-1940**

Abstract

This dissertation examines how the expansion of formal education, so often hailed as a road to opportunity, gave rise to a new form of social inequality in the modern United States. Using quantitative data analysis and qualitative archival sources, it traces the transformation from workplace-based training for employment in the nineteenth century to school-based training in the twentieth century. This dissertation examines the city of Boston, a city that pioneered many developments in American education and was home to a heterogeneous population and diversified economy. Prior interpreters have applied competing frameworks to the relationship between education and work: “human capital” by economists, “credentialism” by sociologists, and “skill-formation regimes” by political scientists. By delving deeply into the history of this transformation, I show how an expanding landscape of schools facilitated social mobility for some, especially women and second-generation immigrants, but also encouraged “professional” strategies of job control based on exclusionary educational credentials that overwhelmingly benefited an educated, white, male, elite. My dissertation reorients the focus of contemporary inequality scholarship from the “turning point” of the 1970s to the profound transformation of paths to work a century earlier.

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the many people who have guided me along my own path to a dissertation. My advisor James Kloppenberg was my champion throughout, and I cannot imagine surviving graduate school without his unfaltering faith, support, and advice. From him I learned to “think big” and the importance of understanding rather than judging the past to illuminate the present. My committee members, Julie Reuben and Claudia Goldin, provided incisive feedback and asked me the right questions. Discussions with Kathleen Thelen have been invaluable in clarifying my central arguments. I was fortuitously introduced to Hal Hansen during my first year of graduate school and his deep comparative understanding of education and work, generosity of time, and honest criticism, were crucial in the development of this project. I also wish to thank Joseph Kett for his encouragement and extensive comments on both the fine points and the big picture of this project. Many other mentors provided vital feedback for which I am grateful: Andy Jewett, one of the most thoughtful and caring historians I know; Lisa McGirr, Sven Beckert, Nancy Cott, Tracy Steffes, Miriam Cohen, William Reese, Angus Burgin, Wendy Gamber, David Bills, Dorothy Sue Cobble, Sarah Deutsch, William Jones, and Ansley Erickson. I am deeply grateful for the incredible community of colleagues that made this dissertation possible and enriched my life as a graduate student. I was lucky to have been surrounded by brilliant historians including Ella Antell, Aaron Bekemeyer, Sam Klug, Andrew Pope, John Gee, Eva Payne, Julie Miller, Shaun Nichols, Irvin Ibarguen, Shuichi Wanibuchi, Jon Booth, Samantha Payne, Tim Barker, Evander Price, Zach Nowak, Elizabeth Katz, Rachel Steely, Sandy Placido, Charles Petersen, Liat Spiro, Lydia Walker,

Erin Hutchinson, Andrew Bellisari, Laura Correa Ochoa, Abbie Modaff, Alicia DeMaio, Sally Hayes, Hardeep Dillon, Claire Adams, Sarah Bates, and Subo Wijeyeratne. Many read numerous chapter drafts presented at the History of Capitalism Dissertation Workshop, the Center for History and Economics Workshop, and the Twentieth Century U.S. History Workshop. Special thanks to my historian colleagues at Columbia University and Yale University, including Nick Juravich, Lindsey Dayton, Jason Resnikoff, Alyssa Greene, Andrea Crow, Noah Rosenblum, Gabe Winant, and Kelly Goodman. Beyond the historians' club, I am thankful for the inspiration and friendship of Niha Singh, Andy Donnelly, Ellora Derenoncourt, Abbie Weil, Jack Nicoludis, Felix Owusu, Josh Gilbert, Nami Mody, Abhi Reddy, Sarah Schlotter, Matt Santana, Avery Davis, Kate Franz, Christine Mitchell, Justin Mueller, Nina Alexander, Jenny Pittman, Joseph Borkowski, Nick Hayes, Guadalupe Mota, and Kenzie Bok. My fellow union organizers in the Harvard Graduate Students Union (HGSU-UAW) taught me that the future of academic labor cannot be taken for granted, and have shown me how to practice the values that inform my scholarship.

This project was completed with financial support from the National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium Grant, the Flaherty Visiting Fellowship at UMass Boston, the Taubman Center Urban Dissertation Fellowship at the Kennedy School of Government, the Boston Area Research Initiative Research Seed Grant, and dissertation fellowships from Harvard University. I also wish to thank the countless archivists and librarians across Harvard's campus at the University Archives, Gutman Library, Baker Library, Schlesinger Library, as well as UMass Boston, MIT, Northeastern University, Boston University, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Boston Public Library, the Boston Athenaeum, the New England Genealogical Society, the Boston City Archives, the Massachusetts State Archives, the Maine Historical Society, the New Hampshire Historical Society, and the

Connecticut Historical Society, that made the research for this dissertation possible. Special thanks to Ed Copenhagen who guided me to the right sources time and time again.

Finally, to my parents Margarita and Chris, and sister Lena: thank you for indulging me in ever evolving arguments, and for your endless patience and love. To Rudi: this project has grown through daily conversations with you, and I am so glad our journey together is just beginning.

Introduction

The rise in social inequality in recent decades has sparked renewed attention to the role of public policy in shaping a more fluid and egalitarian society. Education remains a focal point in political discourse, with studies repeatedly confirming the importance of education in shaping one's life chances.¹ In the words of Thomas Piketty, “the best way to increase wages and reduce wage inequalities in the long run is to invest in education and skills.”² However, the relationship between education and social inequality is still the subject of vigorous debate. One interpretive tradition in economics equates education with the provision of “human capital,” or skills and knowledge, to meet the economy's need for trained employees.³ A more critical sociological tradition frames education and its associated credentials as a mechanism of social stratification and means of perpetuating class distinctions beneath a legitimating, meritocratic guise.⁴ Yet another tradition in political science interprets educational systems or “skill-formation regimes” as complements to particular varieties of capitalism and welfare states.⁵

¹ For example, see Jennifer Ma, Matea Pender, and Meredith Welch, “Education Pays 2016: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society,” Trends in Higher Education Series (New York: College Board, 2016).

² Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 313.

³ Leah Platt Boustan, Carola Frydman, and Robert A. Margo, *Human Capital in History: The American Record* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F Katz, *The Race Between Education and Technology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁴ David K. Brown, *Degrees of Control: A Sociology of Educational Expansion and Occupational Credentialism* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1995); Randall Collins, *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).

⁵ Marius R. Busemeyer and Christine Trampusch, *The Political Economy of Collective Skill Formation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Kathleen Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

This dissertation brings a historical lens to bear on these competing frameworks. Using quantitative data analysis and qualitative archival sources, it shows how increased access to education, so often hailed as a road to opportunity, gave rise to a new form of social inequality in the modern United States. Tracing the transformation of training in the city of Boston—a leader in educational reform and home to a heterogeneous population and diversified industrial and commercial economy—it charts a major shift in the relationship between education and work. In the late nineteenth century, most workers acquired jobs informally and learned at the work site. By the early twentieth century, formal schooling structured most paths to work and education was inextricably linked to social advancement, both ideologically and materially. I argue that an expanding landscape of schools, the majority publicly funded, facilitated social mobility for many, especially women and second-generation immigrants who entered white-collar employment. Their success lent credence to the faith in the American dream. However, the institutional separation of training and work helped erode previous forms of worker power, and shifted the employment structure towards occupations with the least amount of worker control. The expansion of schooling also encouraged “professional” strategies of job control based on exclusionary educational credentials, predominantly acquired at elite colleges and universities, consolidating power in the workplace among a top strata of credentialed managers and supervisors, and perpetuating hierarchies of class, ethnicity, race, and gender.

This dissertation makes several contributions. First, a historical approach reveals how social-scientific frameworks that often speak past one another in fact illuminate different facets of a larger whole, and can be integrated into a history of the co-evolution of training institutions and the organization of production. Second, attention to the historical shift from worksite-based job training to school-based training illuminates the essential role of formal education, and what has often been lauded as the uniquely open and accessible form of public education in the United States, in shaping

the particular form of American capitalism and the welfare state.⁶ This dissertation draws attention to the role of women and second-generation immigrants in driving the process of educational expansion, and the ability of many to use this education as a means of social advancement. However, I also demonstrate how, in reaction, new professional elites used school-based credentials to control the most lucrative sectors of the economy, shaping a new credential-based social hierarchy. My research thus offers a new historical explanation of contemporary U.S. social inequality dating not from the 1970s, but to the profound transformation a century earlier. As the American faith in the panacea of education increasingly influences global policies, an understanding of its consequences becomes ever more pressing.

The relationship between education and work has been theorized and analyzed most deeply in disciplines outside of history: economics, sociology, and political science. The dominant interpretive tradition in the discipline of economics equates education with the provision of “human capital,” or skills and knowledge, to meet the economy’s need for trained employees.⁷ The path-breaking work of Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz explores the economic returns to schooling

⁶ Open and accessible to native-born whites and immigrants across the North because of a decentralized and unregulated structure – the same structure that allowed large regional variation in the U.S., including low-levels of public education and the exclusion of African Americans in the South. Pamela B. Walters and Philip J. O’Connell, “The Family Economy, Work, and Educational Participation in the United States, 1890-1940,” *American Journal of Sociology* 93, no. 5 (1988): 1116–52; Peter H. Lindert, *Growing Public: Social Spending and Economic Growth since the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 87–127; Ben Ansell and Johannes Lindvall, “The Political Origins of Primary Education Systems: Ideology, Institutions, and Interdenominational Conflict in an Age of Nation-Building,” *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3 (2013): 505–522.

⁷ Gary Stanley Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education* (New York: NBER; Columbia University Press, 1964).

over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁸ In the “race” between education and technology from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s, they argue, educational attainment rose parallel to “skill-biased” technological change, causing economic growth and social equality to move in tandem. After the 1970s, however, educational attainment slowed as technological change accelerated, disproportionately benefiting those with the most human capital, and thereby increasing social inequality. In this tradition of scholarship, the policy implications are straightforward: more education is needed to reduce social inequality.

A more critical sociological tradition frames education and its associated credentials as a mechanism of social stratification. Much of this literature is inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s analysis of education as a form of “cultural capital” and the educational system as a means of perpetuating class distinctions beneath a legitimating, meritocratic guise.⁹ Sociologists Randall Collins and David Labaree theorize credentials as a form of cultural currency, used by student-consumers entering a “marketplace of credentials.”¹⁰ Education, according to this line of analysis, does not function primarily as an indicator of productive skills, but rather as a “positional good” to sort individuals, or a form of “social closure” to restrict access to elite occupations and professions.¹¹ Because education

⁸ Goldin and Katz, *The Race Between Education and Technology*.

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Price (Harvard University Press, 1984).

¹⁰ Randall Collins, *The Credential Society: A Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification* (Academic Press, 1979); David F. Labaree, *The Making of an American High School: The Credentials Market and the Central High School of Philadelphia, 1838-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); David F. Labaree, *Education, Markets, and the Public Good: The Selected Works of David F. Labaree*, World Library of Educationalists Series (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007).

¹¹ For helpful overviews of different sociological and economic approaches to the relationship between schooling and jobs, see David B. Bills, “Credentials, Signals, and Screens: Explaining the Relationship between Schooling and Job Assignment,” *Review of Educational Research*, 73, 4 (Winter, 2003): 441-469, and Herman G. van de Werfhorst, “Skills, Positional Good or Social Closure? The Role of Education across Structural–institutional Labour Market Settings,” *Journal of Education and Work* 24, no. 5 (November 1, 2011): 521–48.

is implicated in the reproduction of privilege, expansion may simply lead to credential “inflation” and perpetuate social inequality rather than reduce it.¹²

Another approach, primarily developed in political science, analyzes education and training within a framework of comparative political economy. “Varieties of Capitalism” scholars adopt the insight of human capital theorists that education and training provide skills with economic payoffs, but they reject technological determinism and a simple supply-demand relationship between the two.¹³ Rather, these scholars argue that educational and training regimes co-evolved within geographically and historically specific varieties of capitalism and welfare states. “Liberal” market economies like the U.S., they argue, feature highly fluid labor markets with low employment protection, a lack of certification infrastructure linking schools to the workplace (or vocational education and training systems, or “VET”), and high social inequality. With a historic lack of regulation or protections, they have also tended to feature earlier entry of women into the workforce and less sex segregation in the labor market.¹⁴ “Coordinated” market economies such as Germany, by contrast, have regulated labor markets with high employment protections, well-developed VET systems, flatter wage structures, and a greater degree of sex segregation.¹⁵ Historical institutionalists working in this field, such as Kathleen Thelen, trace these differences to political settlements in the

¹² Ivar Berg, *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).

¹³ Peter A. Hall and David Soskice, *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁴ Margarita Estevez-Abe, “Gendering the Varieties of Capitalism: A Study of Occupational Segregation by Sex in Advanced Industrial Societies,” *World Politics* 59, no. 1 (2006): 142–75.

¹⁵ Many scholars also make a distinction between two types of coordinated economies: Christian-Democratic countries such as Germany, which have strong employment protections for “insiders” but fewer for “outsiders,” and the Social-Democratic countries of Scandinavia, which have high redistributive policies and “flexicurity,” including job-training, unemployment insurance and child-care. This tripartite classification scheme draws on the welfare state classification scheme of Danish sociologist Gosta Esping-Anderson. See Torben Iversen and John D. Stephens, “Partisan Politics, the Welfare State, and Three Worlds of Human Capital Formation,” *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 4–5 (April 1, 2008): 600–637; Gosta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

early industrial period between predominantly male employers, artisans, and labor unions.¹⁶ For scholars working in this tradition, the relationship between a “skill formation regime” and social inequality is largely dependent on its historical development within a national political economy. The “Varieties of Capitalism” scholarship provides a useful broad framework, but does not fully investigate the particular empirical, historical mechanisms through which education and training proved advantageous and helped shape an unequal structure of opportunity.¹⁷

Surprisingly, given its centrality to other social sciences, education and training is an underdeveloped topic in most historical studies of the U.S. political economy. The classic accounts of this era by Samuel Hays, Robert Wiebe, and Alfred Chandler describe the bureaucratic restructuring of the economy and state and the rise of a new middle class, but have little to say about the evolution or role of training institutions on which this new class depended.¹⁸ More recent studies of American governance and capitalism by Leon Fink and Gary Gerstle similarly leave education almost entirely unmentioned.¹⁹ Training is not a primary focus of labor history, nor has it received consideration in the new “history of capitalism.”²⁰ Conversely, the history of education has remained

¹⁶ Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve*; See also the work of Marius R. Busemeyer, *Skills and Inequality: Partisan Politics and the Political Economy of Education Reforms in Western Welfare States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Busemeyer and Trampusch, *The Political Economy of Collective Skill Formation*; and Hal Hansen, “Rethinking Certification Theory and the Educational Development of the United States and Germany,” *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 29, no. 1 (January 2011): 31–55.

¹⁷ The vast majority of VoC scholarship focuses on training for industrial work. While some scholars have begun to focus their attention on the skills required for a knowledge economy and the service transition, this work focuses on the post-1970s period. Iversen and Stephens, “Partisan Politics, the Welfare State, and Three Worlds of Human Capital Formation”; Ben Ansell and Jane Gingrich, “A Tale of Two Trilemmas: Varieties of Higher Education and the Service Economy,” in *The Political Economy of the Service Transition* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁸ Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

¹⁹ Fink devotes a chapter to the university intellectuals who shaped ideas about the American political economy, but does not look at the role of schools as training institutions. Leon Fink, *The Long Gilded Age: American Capitalism and the Lessons of a New World Order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

²⁰ Labor histories that devote the most attention to training do not locate training for work within a broader transformation of educational and training institutions. See Sanford M. Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions,*

a fairly insulated subfield, focused on the institutional development of schooling in isolation from labor markets. When vocational training is discussed, the overwhelming focus is on a very small sector of industrial training, predominantly for men, rather than the much larger vocational role of schools for white collar and professional work of which both men and especially women took advantage. Most educational literature remains divided by institutional type (public or private, urban or rural, primary, secondary, or higher), which obscures the historical contestation that forged their boundaries in the first place.²¹ A historiographical divide persists between those who view the rise of formal education as a democratic, progressive expansion of opportunity and those who see it as a form of class dominance or social control in a Marxist or Foucauldian vein, instead of bridging these frameworks through an empirical account of the different aims, aspirations, and consequences of expanding schools for diverse populations.²² Scholars are just beginning to integrate the history of

and the Transformation of Work in American Industry, 1900 - 1945 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992). New histories of capitalism, drawing on the insight of Karl Polanyi, embed economic processes within specific political and social contexts, but thus far have education has not been a central focus. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (New York: Rinehart, 1944); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); David Huyssen, *Progressive Inequality: Rich and Poor in New York, 1890-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); Noam Maggor, *Brabmin Capitalism: Frontiers of Wealth and Populism in America's First Gilded Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017).

²¹ Christine Ogren has argued that the historiography of higher education still largely remains in institutional “silos.” Ogren, “Sites, Students, Scholarship, and Structures: The Historiography of American Higher Education in the Post-Revisionist Era,” in William J. Reese and John L. Rury, *Rethinking the History of American Education*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 196.

Classic accounts of primary and secondary education include Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Macmillan, 1983); David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); Major works on higher education include Roger L Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge: The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

²² Ellwood Patterson Cubberley, *Public Education in the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919); Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968); Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976); James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); For a Marxist analysis that explains the rise of education in the United States in terms of the absence of the political expression of class, see

training – across multiple institutional sites including schools, the workplace, and the home—within broader histories of political economy.²³

To better understand the relationship between education and social inequality, this dissertation brings a new historical interpretation to bear on these competing frameworks. Delving deeply into the historical record using quantitative census data analysis and qualitative sources from fifteen local archives including school reports, company personnel records, family correspondence, diaries, trade journals, and newspapers, I examine the transformation of training for work across the employment structure in Boston. During this period, municipalities were centers of capital and manufacturing, had the most well-developed public institutions and infrastructure, and were home to heterogeneous populations of many ethnicities, races, and religions. Boston, like all cities, is distinctive: in the late nineteenth century, compared to other American cities, it already had one of the highest rates of school attendance; it maintained a relatively low population of African Americans throughout the 1940s; and did not develop some of the largest mass production industries characteristic of the second industrial revolution. However, many educational

Richard Rubinson, “Class Formation, Politics, and Institutions: Schooling in the United States,” *American Journal of Sociology* 92, no. 3 (1986): 519–48.

²³ These works include Tracy L. Steffes, *School, Society, and State: A New Education to Govern Modern America, 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Ansley T. Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis: School Desegregation and Its Limits*, Historical Studies of Urban America (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016); Nancy Beadie, *Education and the Creation of Capital in the Early American Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); John L. Rury, *Education and Women’s Work: Female Schooling and the Division of Labor in Urban America, 1870-1930* (New York: State University of NY Press, 1991). Steffes and Loss contextualize schools within American political development as institutions of governance, although neither focus on their role as training for employment. Beadie argues that schools functioned as important sites of social, political and financial capital in the antebellum period, although at this time their training function was not central. Rury provides an extremely useful typology of regional patterns of educational development in relation to industrial patterns between the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, which I draw on in my dissertation.

An earlier wave of local social histories of education, work, and family in the 1980s are much closer thematically to my project, although tend not to contextualize their findings within broader national political-economic patterns: Reed Ueda, *Avenues to Adulthood: The Origins of the High School and Social Mobility in an American Suburb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); John E. Bodnar, Roger D. Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Joel Perlmann, *Ethnic Differences: Schooling and Social Structure Among the Irish, Italians, Jews, and Blacks in an American City, 1880-1935* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Judith E. Smith, *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940* (New York: SUNY Press, 1985).

developments pioneered in Boston spread to other regions, and its diversified economy exemplified many of the central processes that characterized the American economy as a whole. Focusing on a single city allows for the holistic reconstruction of the full landscape of training institutions; I also draw on studies of other American cities and regions and other industrialized nations to situate Boston's development.

In the late nineteenth century, most workers acquired jobs informally and learned at the work site. By the early twentieth century, formal schooling structured most paths to work, and education was inextricably linked to social advancement, both ideologically and materially. The institutional structure of training was not determined simply by economic supply and demand or sociological stratification mechanisms, but rather evolved through conflict and coalitions forged by employers, unions, state officials, professional associations, teachers, parents, and students. While class conflict led to a "race to the bottom" in industrial training, the absence of opposition and broad public support for white-collar and professional training fueled a "race to the top" of high schools, colleges, and universities. This upward race provoked elites to pursue "professional" strategies of job control based on advanced credentials to maintain control of the most high-paying occupations. An expanding school system helped many achieve social advancement – particular women who attended public high school and entered white-collar work in extraordinary numbers. However, the triumph of school-based training helped shape an occupational hierarchy that overwhelmingly advantaged a highly educated, white, male elite.

My first chapter sets the stage by surveying late nineteenth-century Boston and the typical paths through which men and women found employment. For nearly all wage earners, these paths were based on informal family and social networks, and learning took place at work rather than

school.²⁴ In northern urban centers like Boston, since the mid-nineteenth century, common schools provided basic literacy and numeracy, moral instruction, and social prestige, but they were not closely linked to employment.²⁵ Only a small “skilled elite” possessed a limited ability to regulate entry into their occupations: male artisans through craft union apprenticeships, and professionals, almost exclusively men except for women teachers, through educational credentials attained at a small number of high schools and colleges.²⁶

The next four chapters trace the movement of job training into formal educational institutions across four key sectors: low-wage work, the trades, sales and office work, and the professions.²⁷ Chapter Two examines the stubborn persistence of informal networks that channeled

²⁴ Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve*; Hal Hansen, “Caps and Gowns: Historical Reflections on the Institutions That Shaped Learning For and At Work, 1800-1945” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1997).

²⁵ On the expansion and role of common schools by mid-nineteenth century, see Ansell and Lindvall, “The Political Origins of Primary Education Systems”; Beadie, *Education and the Creation of Capital in the Early American Republic*; Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*; Lindert, *Growing Public*; Walters and O’Connell, “The Family Economy, Work, and Educational Participation in the United States, 1890-1940”; Rubinson, “Class Formation, Politics, and Institutions.” The expansion of public primary education varied widely by region. While the South, characterized by a coercive labor regime with powerful white landowners and African American sharecroppers, had extremely low levels of public education for either blacks or whites, the Northeast had the highest enrollment and greatest number of public primary schools by the late nineteenth century, followed closely by western states. See James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Christine Trampusch and Dennis C. Spies, “Agricultural Interests and the Origins of Capitalism: A Parallel Comparative History of Germany, Denmark, New Zealand, and the USA,” *New Political Economy* 19, no. 6 (November 2, 2014): 918–42.

Female enrollment in nineteenth-century primary and secondary schools were even higher than male enrollment. John Rury argues that these levels cannot be explained by female wage-labor markets, but rather by the social and cultural functions of education. Rury, *Education and Women’s Work*, 75–91; For studies on the early expansion of education and its relationship to the labor market, see Richard Rubinson and John Ralph, “Technical Change and the Expansion of Schooling in the United States, 1890-1970,” *Sociology of Education* 57, no. 3 (1984): 134–52; Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Lee Soltow, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States: A Socioeconomic Analysis to 1870*, Chicago Originals (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

²⁶ David Hogan draws a comparison between professional associations, working men’s associations, and business cartels and monopolies. David Hogan, “‘To Better Our Condition’: Educational Credentialing and ‘The Silent Compulsion of Economic Relations’ in the United States, 1830 to the Present,” *History of Education Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1996): 243–70.

²⁷ In this dissertation I use the term “low-wage” rather than the common designation “unskilled” because much of the work performed by these workers was not, in fact, unskilled. The typology of skilled/unskilled originated in the use of craft unions to claim a monopoly of a specific set of skills that were not to be performed by an “unskilled” worker. Low-wage is a more neutral descriptor of a position in the economic hierarchy, rather than a value judgment about the inherent skill of the job. Similarly, I use “the trades” or “artisans” in reference to what have often historically, and in historiography to this day, been called “skilled workers.” For a historical discussion of “skill,” see Wolfgang Streeck,

predominantly recent immigrants and African Americans into manual labor and domestic service work at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy. Philanthropists and public administrators sought to ameliorate the conditions of the most impoverished. While a range of reform efforts were attempted, the most successful and politically feasible was the expansion of educational services, based on the common diagnosis that low-wage work was due to lack of skill or training. While domestic workers avoided schools that aimed to train them to become better housekeepers, low-wage workers and their children took advantage of English language instruction, citizenship classes, day care, and elementary schools. Employers used education as an easy proxy for desirable traits, spurring on higher enrollment rates. Weak labor organization and social protections, however, meant that education alone could not reduce the precarity of low-wage work.

The challenges of workplace apprenticeship and the erosion of craft control of trade training is the subject of Chapter Three. Boston and the state of Massachusetts led early efforts for both provision and regulation of the training and certification of trade skills, but the creation of a training regime mutually-coordinated between employers, unions, and the state foundered on craft union hostility, high costs, and low student demand. In a pattern that characterized the American political economy as a whole, industrialists pursued mass production industries, reducing the proportion of artisans in comparison to plentiful immigrant factory operatives, school-trained white-collar staff, and small elite of university-educated engineers.²⁸ Male craft unions, with the exception of the building trades, were severely weakened, and a state-regulated industrial certification regime failed to

“Skills and Politics: General and Specific,” Discussion Paper 11/1 (Cologne, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, 2011).

²⁸ Many factors contributed to this direction of the American political economy, including the vast natural resources and agricultural land that could be exploited, but the availability of a white-collar and professional workforce made possible by the expansion of schools is a central factor. Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy*; Hansen, “Caps and Gowns”; Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve*; Margarita Estevez-Abe, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice, “Social Protection and the Formation of Skills: A Reinterpretation of the Welfare State,” in *Varieties of Capitalism: Trajectories of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

develop. In effect, class conflict drove a “race to the bottom” in the contested arena of industrial training, an important factor that encouraged employers to pursue a different composition of workers with general education. By 1940, those who entered factory work increasingly attended public high schools, where they received an education in English, math, science, and the cultural and behavioral norms of the middle class. The vocational tracks that did exist in high schools were plagued by low status and low demand compared to their academic counterparts, and even employers did not favor their graduates. While this industrial transformation increased access to industrial work by women and immigrants that had previously been excluded by white male craft unions, increased access did not come with increased power in the workplace. Industrial unionism, a strategy that did not rely on control of the training process but rather fostered solidarity across workers of all skill levels, would achieve more successes in the early twentieth century and especially after the Great Depression, but would continue to confront a strong countervailing trend of individual advancement through education.

In contrast to industrial education, vocational training for white-collar work, particularly for women, surged in the early twentieth century, the subject of Chapter Four. Unions were never strong political players in this field; rather, the main competitors were educational institutions that sought to take advantage of a growing market for clerical, sales, and business training. Proprietary commercial schools and “business colleges” made the most rapid inroads into this educational market in the early twentieth century, but a wide, cross-class coalition of students, politicians, and educational leaders successfully pushed for free public alternatives. Proprietary schools were subsequently displaced by the surge of public high schools. These school not only provided “human capital” in the form of technical skills—including English, penmanship, bookkeeping, shorthand, typing—but also cultural knowledge and the behavioral and gendered norms of the middle class, as

well as access to new social networks.²⁹ The success of many white women and second-generation immigrants, who sought out schooling to enter higher-status employment in business, solidified the link between education and social mobility. This expanding sector increasingly differentiated into an extended managerial hierarchy, with a vast pool of female clerical and sales workers with little power to control the conditions of their work on the bottom, and a select group of college-educated male managers and executives at the top. Worker organizing was limited, however, because of the real experience of mobility, the threat of replaceability, and the increasingly important ideology of educational merit and professionalism.³⁰

In response to the declining status of white-collar occupations, middle-class Americans pursued “professional” strategies of job control through advanced schooling. In other words, the very different political configuration of white-collar and professional training drove a “race to the top” of educational credentials, the subject of Chapter Five. Exploring three cases—law, education, and business—this chapter traces the initial growth of proprietary and public schools that began to offer middle-class students a path of entry into these professions. Reacting to the growth of competitor institutions, degree-granting colleges and universities used alumni networks, professional associations, and the state to monopolize pathways into the most lucrative jobs through school-based credentials at their own institutions.³¹ Through informal and formal means of accreditation,

²⁹ Claudia Goldin, “America’s Graduation from High School: The Evolution and Spread of Secondary Schooling in the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Economic History* 58 (1998): 345–374; Labaree, *The Making of an American High School*.

³⁰ Jürgen Kocka, *White Collar Workers in America, 1890-1940: A Social-Political History in International Perspective* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980).

³¹ I use Magali Larson’s notion of a “professionalizing project” to describe the many efforts to elevate the status of occupations through increased educational requirements, and I stress the market determinants of professional success more so than inherent qualities or knowledge competencies of specific types of work. Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: Monopolies of Competence and Sheltered Markets* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012); I also draw on the work of Julia Evetts, “The Sociological Analysis of Professionalism Occupational Change in the Modern World,” *International Sociology* 18, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 395–415; and David P. Baker, “Forward and Backward, Horizontal and Vertical: Transformation of Occupational Credentialing in the Schooled Society,” *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 29, no. 1 (January 2011): 5–29.

these institutions also set the gold standard of prestige that shaped a steeply differentiated educational hierarchy.³² Elite universities channeled their predominantly white, male, Protestant graduates into the top positions in law, business, and educational administration, while women's colleges, proprietary schools, and public institutions channeled their female, second and third-generation immigrant graduates into subordinate positions on the professional ladder.³³

My conclusion summarizes the consolidation of these trends by the mid-twentieth century and suggests a new narrative of the roots of contemporary social inequality that dates from the 1870s, not the 1970s. School-based job training offered an alternative to the predominant model of workplace-based training, but the process of this shift had profound implications for the structure of the American economy and state. Conflict in the industrial sector limited the viability of apprenticeship and the expansion of industrial schools, encouraging employers to pursue mass production strategies that could take advantage of a different labor force, including large numbers of clerical and sales workers. Schools that provided education for these fastest growing white-collar jobs faced little organized opposition, making them accessible to “outsiders” including women and immigrants, but also indicating their lack of regulation. In response, a professional elite used even higher credentials to consolidate control of the most lucrative managerial, supervisory, and executive positions. The triumph of school-based training thus came with an overall shift in the employment structure to jobs with less craft-based power. Mid-twentieth-century welfare state expansion and the gains of industrial unions helped shield many men and women workers from the full effects of this

³² Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, *Private Power for the Public Good: A History of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983); Richard Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age: Universities in Massachusetts, 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge*; William K. Selden, *Accreditation: A Struggle over Standards in Higher Education* (New York: Harper, 1960).

³³ Women succeeded in “demarcating” new female professions that capitalized on the particular gendered norms of care work, such as teaching, social work, nursing, and department store managers, although these were lower status and separate from adjacent professions dominated by men. See Anne Witz, “Patriarchy and Professions: The Gendered Politics of Occupational Closure,” *Sociology* 24, no. 4 (1990): 675–90.

new form of credentialed inequality, but did not reverse its consequences.³⁴ Rather, the continued expansion of education through the mid-twentieth century continued to elaborate this credentialed hierarchy, such that by the 1970s, when the collective power of workers and social protections came under attack, the relative importance of formal education was amplified as a means structuring unequal social opportunity.

This dissertation makes several historiographical interventions. The first is methodological. I argue that social-scientific frameworks that often speak past one another in fact illuminate different facets of a larger whole, and can be integrated into a history of the co-evolution of training institutions and the organization of production. The expansion of schools did provide useful “human capital,” as economists describe, facilitating social mobility for some. However, as elaborated by political scientists, this expansion took place within a politicized landscape of job training institutions, and conflict over control of industrial training eroded predominantly male artisans’ control of the training process. The popularity and broad consensus on expanding white-collar training fueled the rapid growth of school-based training, especially for women, while also enabling credentialed strategies of job control, in a process of class, race, and gender-based stratification best described by sociologists. A historical interpretation can thus integrate multiple theoretical frameworks to explain how expanding access to schooling co-evolved with an occupational structure that reduced job control for all but a credentialed elite by 1940.³⁵

³⁴Accounts of the mid-twentieth century “Great Compression” include: Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*; Kathleen Thelen, *Varieties of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Arne L. Kalleberg, *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s-2000s* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011); Goldin and Katz, *The Race Between Education and Technology*.

³⁵Hogan, “To Better Our Condition”; Busemeyer, *Skills and Inequality*; Daniel Markovitz, “Snowball Inequality: Meritocracy and the Crisis of Capitalism” (Workshop on the Political Economy of Modern Capitalism, Harvard University, December 1, 2014). On the contemporary importance of educational credentials for earnings in the U.S. in particular, see David H. Autor, “Skills, Education, and the Rise of Earnings Inequality among the ‘other 99 Percent,’” *Science* 344, no. 6186 (May 23, 2014): 843–51. David Baker theorizes the self-legitimizing and reinforcing role of educational credentials for work in what he calls the “schooled society.” I agree with Baker’s conclusions but root the

The second and third are interventions into two bodies of historical scholarship: one, modern U.S. political and economic history, and two, the history of education. The former tends to ignore education—its control, its accessibility, and its content—as central to the development of the American political economy. In fact, the growth of the American welfare state in and through expanding public school systems enabled the rise of the new middle classes that built the twentieth-century American economy. While the shift from workplace-based to school-based job training allowed many to enter burgeoning sectors of the economy, this shift also reduced craft-based worker power, and served as the basis of credentialed distinctions that enabled elites to maintain their position of authority. A focus on education can thus tie together some of the dominant narratives of modern U.S. History: the rise of the welfare state, the rise of corporate capitalism, and the rise of an ideology of individual advancement.

The subfield of the history of education, inversely, tends not to situate education within its larger political and economic context, especially in relation to employment. I argue that the distinction between liberal education and vocational education is a false dichotomy, because forms of liberal education have always significantly shaped future employment opportunities. It was the link to employment – particularly the route for women and second-generation immigrants from the public high school to white collar work—that is the primary reason formal education came to be so central to American political culture, ideologically and materially. Additionally, the divisions between private and public schools, and secondary and higher educational institutions in educational historiography prevents a complete understanding of their interaction, an interaction which I show to be essential in driving school expansion.

emergence of this “schooled society” in a more detailed historical account of a changing political economy. David P. Baker, *The Schooled Society: The Educational Transformation of Global Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); Baker, “Forward and Backward, Horizontal and Vertical.”

This dissertation also highlights the limits of education as a policy prescription for addressing the problem of social inequality.³⁶ School-based job training has proved ineffective as a means of overcoming the gender, ethnic, and racial hierarchies of the labor market.³⁷ More subtly, the focus on formal education has obscured the persistent inequality, lack of social protections, and insecurity of labor that remain some of the distinctive features of the American economy. Today, educational expansion cannot mitigate the continued polarization of the “race to the bottom” of a low-wage, predominantly immigrant, service sector and the “race to the top” of an educated professional class of the so-called “knowledge economy.” Recent studies demonstrate the compatibility of educational equality with high social inequality.³⁸ As labor rights and social protections continue to be eroded, the ever-growing importance of educational credentials should not come as a surprise. Rather than the antidote to spiraling inequality, the relentless faith in education is a symptom of its triumph.

³⁶ While previous studies have pointed out the limits of the faith in education as a “panacea,” I offer a diagnosis that centers on the place of schools within a changing political economy. Henry J. Perkinson, *The Imperfect Panacea: American Faith in Education, 1865-1976* (New York: Random House, 1977).

³⁷ The subject of a recent article: Bourree Lam, “Education Doesn’t Solve the Gender Pay Gap,” *The Atlantic*, March 28, 2017, accessed March 31, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/03/gender-gap-dentist/521088/?utm_source=fb

³⁸ Busemeyer, *Skills and Inequality*, 181–85.

Chapter 1

Worlds of Work in the Late Nineteenth Century

“[My] father got a job the second day he was in the country. They were putting in a sewer on Wood Avenue and it was all pick and shovel then...He went out and got a pick and shovel job.”

- Michael Walsh, Irish immigrant to Boston, circa 1890¹

“We had to stay home and work. We did housework—cooking, cleaning, ironing, washing by hand... I learned through other people. You see, you ask, and you learn...We did a lot of crochet. We used to make neckties; we used to make sweaters. I made bedspreads, tablecloths, and linen handkerchiefs.”

- Cemal Cerqua, Italian immigrant to Boston, circa 1890²

“While an apprentice, I used to closely watch the process of hanging shafting whenever I got the chance, which was very seldom. [I] would have given any of my earthly possessions at one time, in exchange for a knowledge of the various details... laid out in a very mysterious way by the ‘boss.’”

- Lewis F. Lyne, Mechanical Engineer and editorial staff of the *American Machinist*, 1881³

Introduction

The words of Michael Walsh, Cemal Cerqua, and Lewis Lyne provide glimpses into the pathways of acquiring and learning work across the employment structure in Boston in the late nineteenth

¹ Katie Kenneally, Anne Millet, and Susan Wick, *Hyde Park* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1976), 10.

² Sari Roboff and Katie Kenneally, *The North End* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1975), 21.

³ L. F. Lyne, “Runing Lines and Putting Up Shafting,” *The American Machinist*, September 17, 1881, 2.

century. These channels were structured by gender, class, race, ethnicity, and religion. From a young age, all girls and boys developed the social connections and learned specific norms, behaviors, skills, and that would prove essential in their future trajectories and identities. The avenues they pursued, however, looked very different from the typical avenues that would become standard in the twentieth century. Most noticeably, formal education in schools did not play a central role in facilitating or training for employment. Most men and women found work through kinship and ethnic networks, and learned work by performing the work itself on the job. Their paths to work were shaped by a range of institutions, but schools, other than for a select few, were marginal to this process.

This chapter surveys the occupational landscape of Boston in 1880 and the institutions, relationships, and practices shaping access to work across the employment structure. The quantitative backbone of this dissertation is based on individual-level historical census data, while context and personal narratives are drawn from periodicals, annual labor reports, family correspondences, diaries, and published oral histories. After surveying the economic and demographic landscape of the city as a whole, I examine three “worlds” of work: a world of laborers and domestic servants, a world of middle class of artisans and shopkeepers, and a world of professionals and business elites. While many studies of work and labor artificially separate out women’s work, this chapter explores the types of paid and unpaid labor performed by all members of the family who lived together and belonged to a community. Each section also explores the typical paths of entry into men’s and women’s work. In the late nineteenth century, most pathways were loosely regulated and predominantly informal. Only a small “skilled elite” possessed a limited ability to control entry into their occupations: male artisans through craft union apprenticeships, and male professionals and women teachers through educational credentials attained at a small number

of high schools and colleges.⁴ Even for professionals, as late as in 1880, formal school-based training was not essential. But this was a period of transformation. Working- and middle-class artisans and small proprietors worried about the decline of apprenticeship and the mentorship of young workers on the job. They criticized existing private and public educational institutions for catering exclusively to a professional class, and advocated free practical instruction that they believed would elevate the standing of their own occupations and improve prospects for their children. The grievances and aspirations of a broad coalition of constituencies would help turn formal schools into the preferred political strategy for responding to the changes brought about by industrial capitalism at the turn of the century. They would also facilitate the process through which school-based training became the dominant path to work, and school-based credentials would structure employment opportunities.

⁴ David Hogan draws a comparison between professional associations, working men's associations, and business cartels and monopolies. David Hogan, "'To Better Our Condition': Educational Credentialing and 'The Silent Compulsion of Economic Relations' in the United States, 1830 to the Present," *History of Education Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1996): 243–70.

Bird's Eye View

In 1880, Boston was a commercial and cultural center of over 360,000 people. About 320,000 of them had arrived in the last 60 years, as Boston boomed as New England's hub for textile

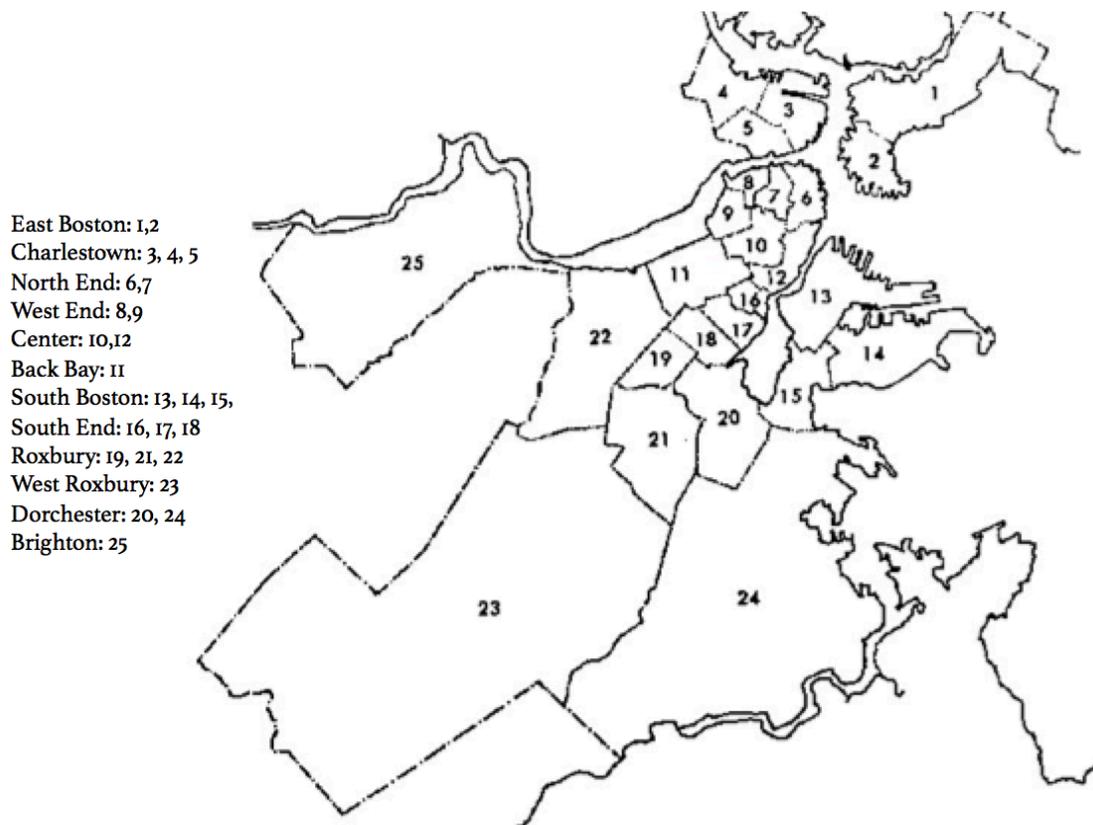


Figure 1.1: Ward Map of Boston, 1880

Source: Lloyd Rodwin, *Housing and Economic Progress* (Harvard University Press, 1961), 166.

manufacturing, shoe and leather production, shipyards and fishing, aided by the labor of thousands of immigrants. After the Civil War, Boston lost its industrial preeminence to large-scale railroad, steel, and oil corporations of the second industrial revolution, but rebuilt a diversified economy

based on custom- and ready-made clothing, the building trades, foundries and machine works, and wholesale commerce in produce, textiles, and manufactures.⁵

Heritage of Boston Population, age 13+, 1880		
	Nativity (White)	Heritage (White)
MA	42.19	17.77
NE	14.76	16.73
US	2.24	2.16
Canada	7.88	6.42
Eng/Scot	4.05	6.56
Ireland	23.9	42.65
Italy	0.43	0.53
Germany	2.64	4.36
Poland	0.17	0.22
Austrian	0.04	0.07
Lithuanian	0.11	0.15
Russian	0.69	0.88
Scandinavian	0.55	1.06
Western Eur.	0.01	0.01
Greece	0.25	0.31
Portugal	0.01	0.01
Middle East	0.09	0.1
Asia		
Race of Boston Population, age 13+, 1880		
White	98.25	
Black	1.7	
Asian	0.05	

Figure 1.2

Source: IPUMS 1880 100%.

composition of the Boston population.⁷

Boston's port was the center of the city's commerce and where new immigrants arrived and resided close to their employment, living in Charlestown, the North End, and East Boston as depicted in Figure 1.1. Irish day laborers and teamsters loaded, unloaded, and transported textiles, lumber, tobacco, fish, and other goods from the port to large storage warehouses and surrounding neighborhoods. Shoe, confectionery, furniture, and machinery factories in Boston's industrial districts of the South End and South Boston employed Irish laborers and factory operatives. Smaller manufacturers and artisans—Canadian carpenters, German machinists, New England-born tailors, dressmakers and milliners—had their workshops in the city center downtown. Small proprietors sold groceries, produce, or dry goods. Massachusetts-born salesmen and store clerks assisted customers, sold goods, and kept accounts. A more exclusive group of Bostonian merchants and managers would direct large-scale operations.⁶ Figure 1.2 depicts the ethnic and racial

⁵ Thomas H. O'Connor, *Civil War Boston: Home Front and Battlefield* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997); Edwin Monroe Bacon, *The Book of Boston: Fifty Years' Recollections of the New England Metropolis* (Boston: Book of Boston Company, 1916).

⁶ *Leading Manufacturers and Merchants of the City of Boston: And a Review of the Prominent Exchanges* (Boston: International Publishing Co., 1885).

Many workers lived outside the central commercial districts of Boston. The city boundaries had grown through the course of the nineteenth century: the towns of Roxbury and Dorchester were annexed immediately after the Civil War, and West Roxbury, Brighton and Charlestown joined Boston at the start of the economic depression in 1873. These towns were attracted to the centralized public services that the municipality was willing to offer in exchange for broadening Boston's tax base. New England and Canadian carpenters built new houses, laid down railroads, and constructed streetcars that would carry passengers to and from Boston's new suburban districts.⁸



Figure 1.3

Source: IPUMS 1880 100%.

Construction had played a central role in reviving the local economy during the 1870s, facilitating the growth of strong building trade unions that would come to be dominated by Irish and Canadian workers.⁹ Beyond the city proper—in the towns of Lawrence, Waltham, and Framingham—were the largest factories of many Boston-headquartered

⁷ The statistical data is from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) 100% sample the tenth decennial census of 1880, analyzed with STATA, a statistical software program (Hereafter to be cited as *IPUMS*.) Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 6.0* [dataset] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015) <http://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V6.0>. “MA”=Massachusetts, “NE”= Northeast, which excludes Massachusetts (listed separately) and includes New York. “U.S.” excludes the Northeast. “Heritage” is calculated based on whether or not that individual had either a mother or father from a foreign country. For the Massachusetts, Northeastern, and U.S. categories, heritage would mean that both parents are from that location. If a child had an Irish father and Massachusetts-born mother, that individual’s “heritage” would be Irish, for the purposes of this study.

⁸ Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); Walter Irving Firey, *Land Use in Central Boston* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947); Lloyd Rodwin, *Housing and Economic Progress: A Study of the Housing Experiences of Boston's Middle-Income Families*, Publications of the Joint Center for Urban Studies (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961).

⁹ James R. Green and Hugh Carter Donahue, *Boston's Workers: A Labor History* (Boston: Boston Public Library, 1979).



Figure 1.4

Source: IPUMS 1880 100%.



Figure 1.5

Source: IPUMS 1880 100%.

firms, employing thousands of predominantly Irish workers in mills, paper, and shoe factories.

Hidden from view was the bulk of women's labor. As Figure 1.3 indicates, less than one third of women were part of the paid workforce: the majority of their labor was unpaid labor in the home. Because women who were not in the paid labor force were classified in the U.S. census as either "keeping house" or their occupation was left blank, I have grouped all non-occupational responses together in this chart. Figures 1.4 and 1.5 depict the occupational distribution of the men and women's paid workforce, respectively. Of women in the paid workforce, the vast majority worked in service positions.¹⁰ Domestic servants, cooks, and laundresses worked in about 10% of

¹⁰ These tables are based on the occupational scheme of the "OCC1950" variable in IPUMS. This scheme was developed to be consistent for occupational entries from 1850-1950. Written entries in the manuscript census were translated directly into this scheme. OCC1950 groups occupations into a typology ("professional" "service" etc.) which I have largely followed, but I have changed some of the titles to make them gender neutral (such as "craftsmen" to "artisans") and also made some adjustments for some of the historical gender biases in classification. For example, in the original scheme, dressmakers are classified as operatives, when dressmaking was in fact a highly skilled trade in 1880. I thus have moved dressmakers over to the "artisan" category. Margo Anderson Conk details the cultural and gendered biases that shaped successive occupational classification schemes, including those on which the IPUMS schemes are based, in Margo Anderson Conk, *The United States Census and the New Jersey Urban Occupational Structure, 1870 - 1940* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980); Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census: A Social History*, Second edition. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

Boston households, the homes of wealthy merchants, proprietors, bankers, or professionals in the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and Boston's wealthy suburbs.¹¹ Most of these service jobs belonged to Irish immigrants, but they were also some of the only jobs open to African Americans, who made up 2% of Boston's working population. Service workers came from families who lived in the poorest immigrant districts such as the North End or the West End. In the vast majority of homes without servants, it fell to the wife, mother, or daughter to wash, clean, cook, and look after young children. Many mothers, sisters, and children also took in home work—sewing for the textile industries, making paper boxes for local paper factories—to supplement their family income.¹²

The World of Low-Wage Work

The majority of families whose members performed low-wage work as laborers and service workers lived in the North End, West End, and sections of the South End, Charlestown, East and South Boston. These families were disproportionately first and second generation Irish, as depicted in Figure 1.6 and 1.7 that show “overrepresentation” of specific heritage and racial groups in selected men's and women's occupations in 1880.¹³ Irish Catholics had begun immigrating to Boston in the eighteenth century, and the Irish potato famine and the lure of job opportunities in the mid-nineteenth century turned Boston into a majority Irish city, with recent immigrants concentrated in the North End. Despite their numbers, however, even in 1880 no person of Irish heritage had ever

¹¹ *IPUMS*

¹² Eileen Boris, *Home to Work: Motherhood and the Politics of Industrial Homework in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Amy Hewes, *Industrial Home Work in Massachusetts* (Boston: WEIU, 1915).

¹³ “Overrepresentation” is calculated by subtracting the percentage of each heritage in the overall workforce from their percentage in the specific occupation. For example, if Irish men comprised 40% of the male workforce, but 80% of all laborers, Irish are “overrepresented” by 40%. *IPUMS*, 1880.

been elected to political office, and Irish men were relegated to low-wage jobs as day laborers and teamsters; Irish women typically worked as domestic servants.¹⁴

These Irish families lived next to smaller groups of Italians, Poles, and Scandinavians who

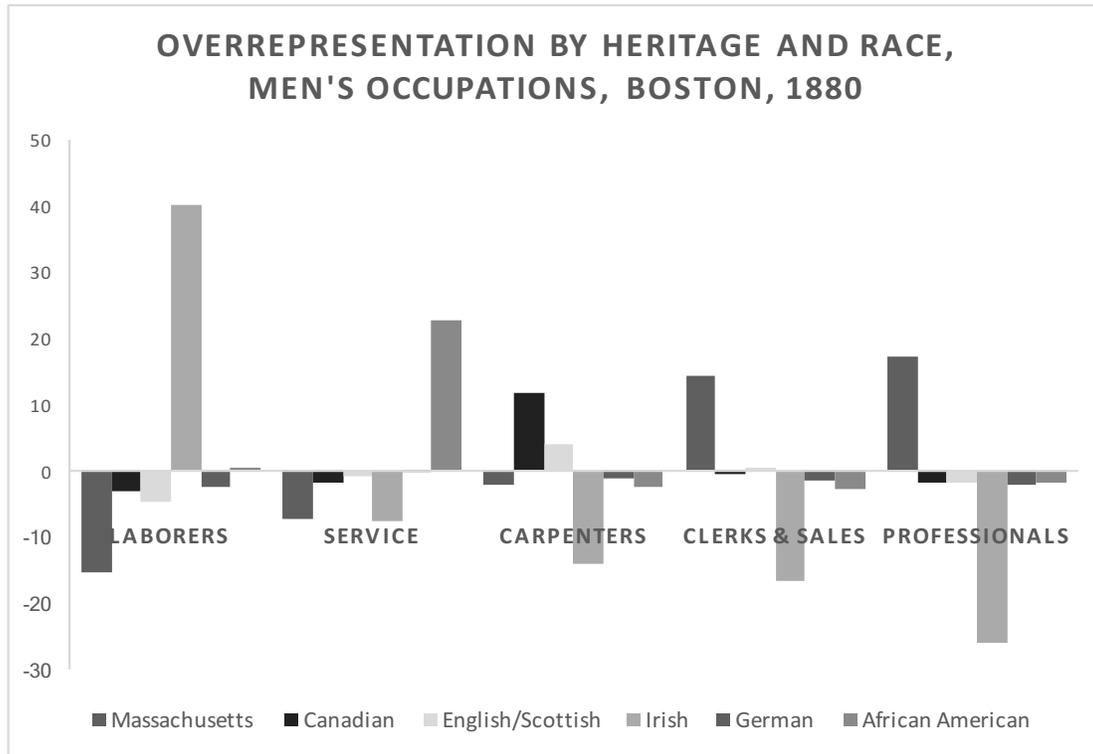


Figure 1.6

Source: IPUMS 1880 100%.

worked as day laborers or peddlers. African Americans, many of whom had migrated from southern cities like Richmond, Virginia, were geographically concentrated in the West End and a section of Beacon Hill known as “Nigger Hill,” where historically domestic servants lived to be close to Boston’s wealthiest households.¹⁵ Despite their higher levels of literacy compared to recent

¹⁴ Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1880: A Study in Acculturation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959); Thomas H. O'Connor, *The Boston Irish: A Political History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995); Dennis P. Ryan, *Beyond the Ballot Box: A Social History of the Boston Irish, 1845-1917* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983).

¹⁵ Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty: Boston 1865-1900* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).

immigrants, black men almost exclusively filled low-status service sector jobs as coachmen, porters, barbers, waiters, and janitors; black women worked as domestic servants, cooks, and maids. Sons and daughters of laborers and service workers had often left school by the age of fourteen. The most important institutions shaping pathways to work in this world were immigrant and kinship networks, rooted in local communities but with far-reaching ties, which provided needed assistance and support.

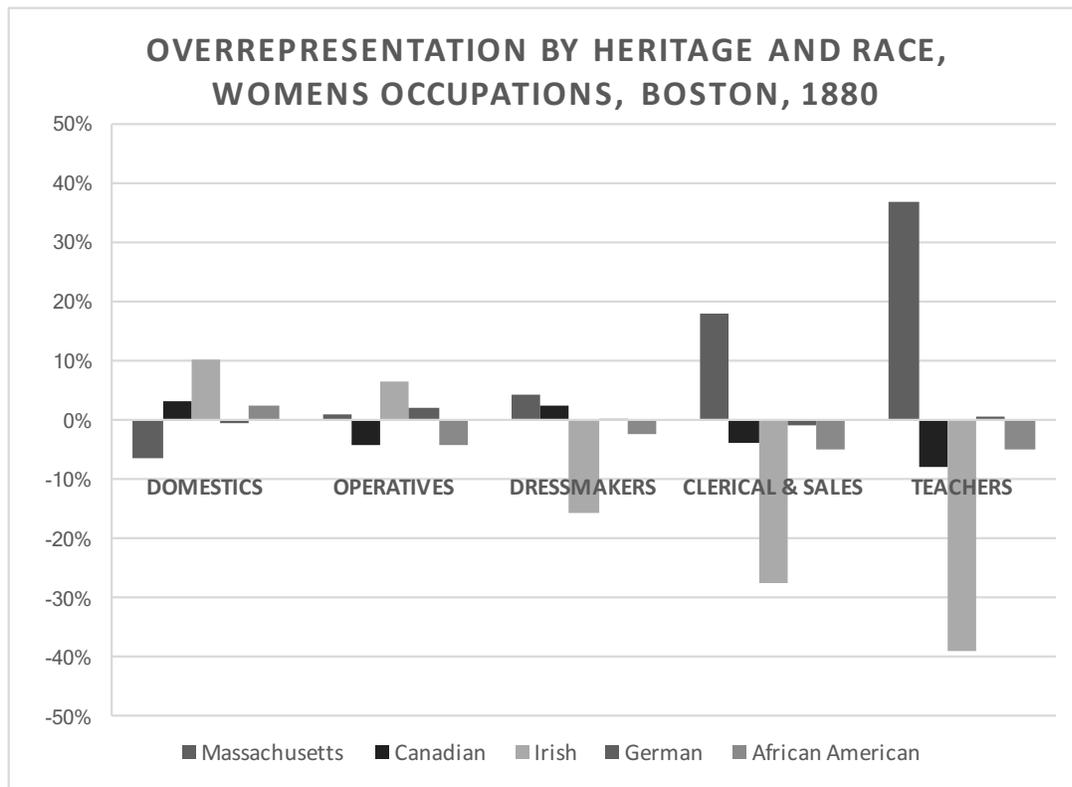


Figure 1.7

Source: IPUMS 1880 100%.

Laboring Men

The single most common low-wage occupation for men was that of “laborer,” making up 17% of the men’s workforce.¹⁶ The Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, founded in 1869 with labor reformers George McNeill and later Carroll D. Wright as chief commissioners, produced reports with invaluable statistics, testimony and observations about the living conditions of workers at the bottom of the economic hierarchy. On average, laborers made between \$6-8 per week, or \$300-\$400 per year.¹⁷ These men were disproportionately Irish –80% of laborers were Irish, compared to 40% of the male workforce as a whole. Laborers helped construct houses, buildings, streets, and railways; they worked on ships, docks, wharves, and warehouses, and as helpers in workshops. Dennis Manning, an Irish immigrant to Boston born in 1883, recalls: “Most of the greenhorns went to work on the boats, or on the railroads. Some went in groups into the wool houses. Some did sugar hauling.”¹⁸ This work was difficult, dangerous, and unregulated.

Another 21% of working men were what can be loosely grouped as “operatives.” This category combines a range of transportation and factory occupations: teamsters, hack drivers, sailors, factory operatives, and apprentices. These occupations belonged to New Englanders, Canadian, and English, although Irish were still significantly overrepresented. Teamsters made slightly more on average than laborers – between \$8-\$12 per week, or \$400-600 per year.¹⁹ Most

¹⁶ This was a gendered census category: “laborers” were almost entirely men, and even women who performed manual labor in the home would not be categorized as such. *IPUMS*, 1880.

¹⁷ Carroll D. Wright, *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1879*, Public Document No. 31 (Boston, MA: Rand, Avery, & Co., Printers to the Commonwealth, 1879), 67–77. These statistics are averages for Massachusetts in 1878. In Boston wages were typically slightly lower, however, 1878 Boston was just emerging out of its depression and by 1880 prices were a bit higher. As such, these are meant to be estimates.

¹⁸ Katie Kenneally, *South Boston* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1976), 13.

¹⁹ Wright, *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1879*, 67–77.

factory operatives were in industries that technological change had already transformed by 1880, such as the boot, shoe, and leather industries.²⁰ Thomas McNulty was one such shoe factory worker, born in Canada to Irish parents, who went to work at the age of 12. He lived with his father, a laborer, his mother, who kept house, his sister, a tailor, and his 14-year-old brother who worked as a clerk in a store.²¹ He was likely one of the many generic “shoemakers,” machine-hands, and table-men who made laborer’s wages at \$7-\$8 a week.²²

Hucksters, peddlers, and street vendors also belonged to this world. Nominally categorized as white-collar proprietors, these small-scale, local sellers made up about 1% of the male workforce.²³ As a sector, this group was predominantly Irish, but this was one of the most common occupations for recent immigrants, especially Italians. Of the 23 Italian families who dropped off their children at the North Bennet Street Nursery School in the North End in 1883, 16 fathers or mothers “peddled fruit” to earn income.²⁴ A high number of recent Italian immigrants in the North End also initially got their start as street performers. Frank Beliden was a 40-year-old musician from Italy living with his wife and two sons, including a 16-year-old (also listed as a musician), in the same

²⁰ Mary H. Blewett, *Men, Women, and Work: Class, Gender, and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1780-1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

²¹ Year: 1880; Census Place: Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts; Roll: 556; Family History Film: 1254556; Page: 391B; Enumeration District: 676; Image: 0445. Many of the examples of this chapter are culled from tracing individuals from the IPUMS sample back to their original entries in the manuscript census, digitized and made searchable by *ancestry.com* – this ensures that these examples were randomly selected. Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *1880 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010.

²² Wright, *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1879*, 68, 72–77.

²³ This is another occupation that is not well-captured by the census or IPUMS OCC1950 occupational scheme. While most trades are broken down into specific occupations, a large category of white collar workers are listed as “managers and proprietors,” which does not distinguish very small from very large enterprises. Occupations such as “trader” or “dealer” or “clerk” were written directly into the manuscript census, but in fact encompass a wide range of occupations. I have thus estimated the breakdown of this large category into the three “worlds of work,” based on the occupational information provided by IPUMS as well as tracing a small sample of these workers back to the manuscript census, where I could learn more about their family circumstances.

²⁴ North Bennet Street Industrial School (Boston, Mass.) Records 1880-1973; ‘Record of Families Connected with No. Bennet Day Nursery, 1883.’ MC269, Series II, Box 101, Biv.45. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

North End tenement with at least four other Italian musicians, between 27-50 years old, the majority of whom could not read or write.²⁵

Finally, a range of “service” occupations occupied the bottom of the male occupational hierarchy. 6% of working men were porters, coachmen, waiters, janitors, barbers, or bartenders. African Americans disproportionately occupied these service jobs. While blacks comprised 3.5% of the male workforce, they made up 26% of male service workers.²⁶ Samuel Wilson was a 47-year-old cook, listed as mulatto in the 1880 census, who could not read or write. He had moved from Virginia with his wife and five children in the last 10-12 years, and lived in a tenement on Shawmut Ave in the South End. His wife and 23-year-old son, working as an upholsterer, were also illiterate. His 15 and 13-year-old daughters worked as “baby tenders,” while his 18-year-old son worked as a bellboy.²⁷

“Keeping House”

These families were as dependent on the labor of wives, mothers and children as they were on the labor of fathers and husbands. Before household labor-saving technologies and the widespread adoption of ready-made clothing, household cleaning, cooking, washing, sewing and mending clothes took hours of often strenuous labor. Care work—caring for young, elderly, or sick family

²⁵ Year: 1880; Census Place: Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts; Roll: 554; Family History Film: 1254554; Page:434A; Enumeration District: 624; Image: 0153

²⁶ Except bartenders, who were majority Irish. *IPUMS*.

²⁷ Year: 1880; Census Place: Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts; Roll: 556; Family History Film: 1254556; Page:322A; Enumeration District: 673; Image: 0306.

members—was also almost exclusively women’s labor.²⁸ In addition, male laborer wages were not often stable, and unemployment due to illness, injury, disability, or economic downturns often pushed women into the wage economy.²⁹ Within the households of laborers, about 3% of wives worked in the wage economy, while 40% of aunts, 16% of daughters, and 19% of other female relatives brought in income.³⁰ One Boston Irish laborer, “Case No. 346,” worked paving the streets of Boston and made \$436 a year. He lived with his wife and four children, from two to thirteen years of age. His wife “went out cleaning and washing” and earned another \$200 a year. Their diet consisted of bread, butter, coffee, tea, meat or fish, and potatoes. The fact that the wife needed to work outside the home left her, in the eyes of the reporters, “with no time to keep her own house clean.” The family’s tenement of three rooms, for which they paid \$126, was “in a poor locality...meanly furnished and dirty.”³¹ But even with the wife’s extra income, the total family earnings of \$636 fell short of their \$661 cost of living, including \$376 in groceries to feed their four children. For other households in economic straits, women served as the primary breadwinners. In 1870, “P-D,” a laborer, “had not been able to obtain work since Christmas, with the exception of a few days; wages \$1.67 per day.” His wife “goes out washing” to support them and their two

²⁸ Ileana Devault, “Family Wages: The Roles of Wives and Mothers in U.S. Working-Class Survival Strategies, 1880–1930,” *Labor History* 54, no. 1 (2013): 1–20; Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Vanessa H. May, *Unprotected Labor: Household Workers, Politics, and Middle-Class Reform in New York, 1870-1940* (Chapel Hill: Univ of North Carolina Press, 2011); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Forced to Care: Coercion and Caregiving in America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010); Lara Vapnek, *Breadwinners: Working Women and Economic Independence, 1865-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

²⁹ According to a Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor (BSL) study of unemployment for the year 1878, 76% of those unemployed in Suffolk county were “unskilled” laborers. This was the first year the BSL studied unemployment as a phenomenon. Wright, *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1879*, 6.

³⁰ *IPUMS*.

³¹ Henry K. Oliver and George E. McNeil, *Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1869-70*, Senate No. 120 (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter, State Printers, 1870), 522.

children.³² While some public and private charities provided some assistance to these laborers' families, the social safety net in 1880 was very uneven.³³

Women were often burdened with both work inside and outside the home, or had to make difficult choices between them. One eldest daughter “had had a good place at service” to earn money to support her widowed mother and three younger children, but she had to give up this job “to come home to take care of her mother.”³⁴ Many women tried to find forms of work that could be done at home. Piecework for the clothing industry was one of the most common options. For example, “P-C” was a laborer out of work, and his wife and daughter earned income by “making flannel shirts at \$1.25 per dozen; the two can make a dozen a day with the help of sewing machine.”³⁵

While formal lodging houses tended to be run by middle-class New England or Canadian families, many poor and working class women took on boarders and lodgers. In 1880, about 15% of households in Boston housed boarders, and in 1885 they made up 10% of the city population.³⁶

³² Ibid., 528.

³³ In 1880 there were dozens of charities, relief funds, almshouses and mutual aid societies in Boston. Many specialized in serving immigrants, children, the sick, the “defective,” the “idiotic and feeble-minded,” “fallen women,” or “adult convicts.” The Associated Charities had been organized in 1879 to more systematically and scientifically administer aid in the city of Boston, but they still made subjective judgments of those worthy and “unworthy” to receive relief. According to the Associated Charities mission statement, those unworthy were: “... (c.) The shiftless, who are too idle to work, and who steadily refuse it when offered... (d.) the improvident, who squander their means... (e.) the vicious, who drink or gamble away their means, and who are found hopelessly bad after attempt to reform... (f.) confirmed paupers, who prefer to live on alms... (g.) tramps, living worthless lives and too often thieves.” Associated Charities of Boston, *A Directory of the Charitable and Beneficent Organizations of Boston* (Boston: A. Williams & Co, 1880), iv–vii.; Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Protestants Against Poverty: Boston's Charities, 1870-1900* (Greenwood Pub. Corp., 1971); Peter C. Holloran, *Boston's Wayward Children: Social Services for Homeless Children, 1830-1930* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ Press, 1989).

³⁴ Oliver and McNeil, *Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1869-70*, 526.

³⁵ Ibid., 527; Viviana A. Rotman Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); David Nasaw, *Children of the City: At Work and At Play* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

³⁶ Albert Benedict Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem in Boston* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906), 43.

Families often boarded friends or family from the same region or country as themselves, facilitating migration patterns.³⁷

Domestic Servants

While homes were an important center of work for the majority of women, the largest single occupation for women required living in someone else's home.³⁸ Of the households that had servants, they were disproportionately (63%) the households headed by professionals, manufacturers, merchants, officials, or retired men.³⁹ Most domestics were between the ages of 18-25, and were disproportionately Irish, Canadian, and African American.

Women working as domestic servants could serve as chambermaids, laundresses, seamstresses, cooks, nursery governesses, nursery maids, parlor maids, "second girls," or waitresses. For these more specialized positions, a woman might earn between \$6-9 per week, or \$312-468 per year. The majority, however, were hired for "general housework," typically the youngest women, and might pay less than \$2 per week—with board included, the equivalent of \$5 per week (or \$260 per year).⁴⁰ Nearly 70% of these women helped support their family with these earnings.⁴¹ A study of domestic service in 1898 found that the average domestic worked 10.5 hours per day, was on call an

³⁷ Elizabeth Pleck found that in over half of the southern black families taking in boarders in 1870 and 1880, both tenant and landlord were from the same home state. Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty: Boston 1865-1900*, 73.

³⁸ Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*; May, *Unprotected Labor*; Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Vapnek, *Breadwinners*.

³⁹ These are households headed by working men and women, excluding female head of households who "kept house." *IPUMS*, 1880

⁴⁰ Carroll D. Wright, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1884*, Public Document No. 15 (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1884), 76.

⁴¹ Horace G. Waldin, "Social Conditions in Domestic Service," *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin* No. 13 (February 1900): 16.

additional 1.7 hours, and had 3.5 hours free time. Typical work days began at 6am or 7am, curfew was at 10pm, domestics had to receive permission before going out at any time, and visitors had to be received in the kitchen, if they were allowed in at all.⁴²

About 30% of teenage domestics still lived with parents, and about 10% did so by age 20.⁴³ The vast majority of domestics, however, lived in their employer's home. While they lived away from home, they were not completely isolated from their ethnic and religious community. As John Ward recalls, "The Irish living-in girls and the Irish working men helped build St. Peter's Church with their nickels, dimes, half dollars and dollars. Father Ronan used to go round to the back door of all the houses and talk to the living-in girls and they're the ones that really started St. Peter's Church."⁴⁴ Through social and religious organizations, community networks were preserved by domestic workers despite the close surveillance of mistresses.

Domestic service was one of the least desirable occupations for women, and already in 1880, young women were increasingly choosing factory or white-collar work over service work. The "vexed question of domestic service" generated a large amount of debate and discussion in the popular press.⁴⁵ In 1897, the Women's Educational and Industrial Union conducted interviews with 100 shop employees and 100 factory employees in Boston, asking what their objections to domestic service were. The primary objections raised were the less favorable hours of labor and the social stigma attached to the position of domestics, in addition to a litany of others: isolation due to

⁴² Horace G. Waldin, "Hours of Labor in Domestic Service," *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin* No. 8 (October 1898): 23.

⁴³ *IPUMS*, 1880.

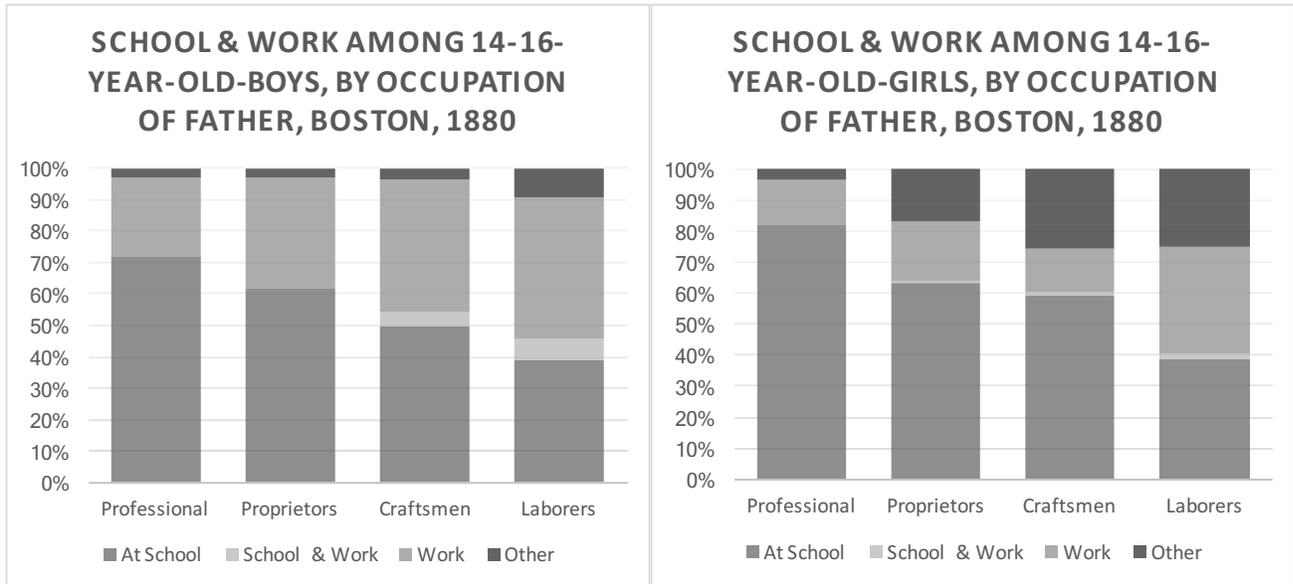
⁴⁴ Katie Kenneally, *Dorchester* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1976), 17.

⁴⁵ Sallie Elizabeth Joy White, *Housekeepers and Home-Makers* (Boston: Jordan, Marsh & Company, 1888), 215.

working alone, lack of independence, having women employers, the difficulty of work, the distastefulness of work. The prospect of improved pay did not change their minds.⁴⁶

What about the other half of working women, who had occupations outside the home and outside the service sector? About 10% of the working population of women were in low-wage jobs as “operatives” in shops and factories, including seamstresses, tailors, shirt, cuff, and collar workers, corset makers, sewing machine operatives, hat and cap makers, box factory operatives, carpet makers, book binders and finishers, confectionery workers, or cigar makers. However, the remaining 40% of “working girls”—while objects of concern for reformers like George McNeill and Carroll D. Wright—were not working in the most menial jobs, and demographically not from the poorest families. Demographically, women who worked outside the home and who were not domestic servants tended to be the daughters of artisans and small proprietors, and worked in the trades, as store clerks, or as teachers.

⁴⁶ Waldin, “Hours of Labor in Domestic Service,” 27; The WEIU launched a Domestic Reform League as part of their employment bureau, through which they sought to educate and foster mutual understanding between employers and employees. This effort will be described more fully in Chapter 2. “Women’s Educational and Industrial Union (Boston, Mass.). Records, 1894-1955; Domestic Reform League, 1897-1904. B-8, Folder #5-#6. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.” n.d.

Child Labor**Figure 1.8**

Source: IPUMS 1880 10%.

Figure 1.9

Source: IPUMS 1880 10%.

When children were old enough to work, they could also help supplement the family income.⁴⁷

George McNeill made the issue of child labor central to his Bureau of Statistics of Labor Reports.

He and other reformers worried that children working to support their families were being robbed

of their childhood. In Mrs. M's case, they wrote: "children looking very pale and haggard. This

family was in a most pitiable condition, poverty robbing the children of their very childhood and

thrusting them into helpless degradation."⁴⁸ Discussions of child labor were inevitably linked to

discussions of school attendance. Of course, many children, even middle-class youth, worked while

also attending school – helping out with piece work, working afternoons or evenings, and over

summers. However, the sons and daughters of laborers were most likely to leave school early to

work, and for them school and work was a trade-off. While only 25% of the 14-16-year-old sons of

⁴⁷ Nasaw, *Children of the City*; Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*; Mary Ann Mason, *From Father's Property to Children's Rights: The History of Child Custody in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁴⁸ Oliver and McNeill, *Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1869-70*, 528.

professionals worked, 45% of the 14-16-year-old sons of laborers worked, depicted in Figure 1.8.⁴⁹ Daughters attended school in slightly higher numbers than sons, except for the daughters of laborers, depicted in Figure 1.9. It is likely that the high number of daughters listed as “other” were performing unpaid household work. This age group was the primary target of reformers.

Class and ethnic differences strongly marked the child labor market. A high number of Irish boys worked as laborers, and over half of Irish girls worked as domestics; by contrast, a higher number of boys and girls from Massachusetts and the Northeast worked as sales clerks.⁵⁰ A higher proportion of African American boys and girls worked in private households than their white counterparts.⁵¹ Many girls left school to work at home caring for parents and siblings or cooking, cleaning, and laundering.⁵² Children tended to work if their parents were ill or unable to work, or if their parent was widowed.⁵³ 14-16-year-olds who worked were 1.5 times as likely to have a widowed mother than those in school. In the case of one Irish laborer in a machine shop, the BSL Reporter note: “The mother is dead, and the eldest, a girl of 15, takes entire charge of housework, and performs her many duties with great care.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Data from IPUMS USA 10% 1880 sample, because this is the only 1880 sample with the “school” variable listed. The sample size was too small for breaking this. If these individuals were listed as having an occupation and also attending school, they are depicted here as “School & Work.” “Other” includes a small number of young daughters listed as “keeping house,” but on the whole the occupations for these individuals were left blank in the manuscript census. Likely, they performed some unpaid labor within or outside the household.

⁵⁰ While 14.5% of boys born in Ireland age 14-16 worked as laborers and 7% as sales clerks, 2% of boys of Massachusetts heritage worked as laborers and 27% worked as sales clerks. Among 14-16 year old girls, 54% of those born in Ireland worked as domestic servants and 0.4% as sales clerks, compared to 42% of girls of Massachusetts heritage as domestic servants and 8% as sales clerks. IPUMS USA.

⁵¹ 20% of African American boys age 14-16 worked as servants in private households, compared to 2.4% of boys born in Ireland; 68% of African American girls 14-16 worked as servants compared to 54% of girls born in Ireland. IPUMS.

⁵² Oliver and McNeil, *Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1869-70*, 528.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 525.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 526.

The question of why students left school early to work was extensively debated. Some blamed negligent parents.⁵⁵ Others blamed poverty.⁵⁶ The BSL reporters concluded that families sent their children to work early because children's income was essential to the family income.⁵⁷ But the choice between work and school for their children could be a painful one to parents. A wool sorter lamented the trade-off in his own family between working and education: "My wages have been reduced forty per cent in the last three years; and, if my children were old enough, I should be obliged to set them at work, thereby causing them to lose the education they ought to have, and that I would give them had I the means."⁵⁸

The concern with child labor spurred many philanthropic enterprises as well as public institutions. Beginning in the 1830s, a range of asylums, missions, and industrial schools took in orphaned, "destitute," "indigent," and "feeble-minded" children. Many offered instruction in shoe making, tailoring, sewing, cooking, and housework, as much to instill industrious habits into these youth as to provide employable skills. Despite the bold rhetoric of the philanthropists who led them, the reality was that most of these institutions catered to a few dozen students each, and had limited impact. By contrast, the highest-enrolled and most relevant institutions to the sons and daughters of low-wage workers were the public elementary schools, enrolling nearly 50,000 children.⁵⁹ These schools provided basic literacy and numeracy, as well as cultural and behavioral norms of the middle

⁵⁵ Wright, *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1879*, 125.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Carroll D. Wright and Geo. H. Long, *Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1875*, Public Document No. 31 (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter, State Printers, 1875), 442.

⁵⁸ Wright, *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1879*, 125.

⁵⁹ Public reformatory institutions have been central to the revisionist school of the history of education, led by scholars such as Michael Katz, who have examined schools as institutions of discipline and social control. Without objecting to some of these functions, my analysis suggests that parents and students had a significant degree of agency in their choice to attend, especially the most popular elementary schools, and these institutions were responsive to public demand. Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968).

class. They also increasingly provided English language instruction for immigrants, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. However, in 1880, the majority of the sons and daughters of low-wage workers did not complete elementary school. In 1852 Massachusetts had passed the first compulsory school law in the country, requiring all children 8-14 to attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks a year, and appointed truancy officers the same year. The School board also opened two schools specifically for licensed bootblack and newsboys. However, licensing and attendance laws were routinely violated, and many children continued to go to work before the age of 14.⁶⁰

Immigration Networks

Most low-wage work in Boston was acquired through informal networks of family and friends. Because foreign-born immigrants dominated these low-paying jobs, kinship and immigrant networks were essential in first facilitating their migration to Boston. Friends and relatives often helped finance the costs of long-distance migration, and provided advice on how to travel and where to go upon arrival. Once these initial networks were established, chain migration patterns reinforced each other over time. Employers actively encouraged these networks, and in times of labor shortage even sent their own recruiters to facilitate this migration.⁶¹ As Dennis Manning, who arrived in South Boston in 1903, recalls:

⁶⁰ In 1880, “grading” of classrooms by age was an educational reform in progress, and many youth took longer than 14 years to complete elementary school. This suggests that many 14-year-olds who left school only had a 5th, 6th, or 7th grade education. Boston School Committee, *Appendix, Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1880* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, City Printers, 1881), 68.

⁶¹ Joshua L. Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work, Searching for Workers: American Labor Markets During Industrialization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); John E. Bodnar, Roger D. Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Suzanne Model, “Work and Family: Blacks and Immigrants from South and East Europe,” in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*,

To come to America, you had to be sponsored or needed money with you. If you were booked into Boston and, of course, landed in Ellis Island (Castle Gardens), it didn't cost anything extra to come by the Fall River Line to Boston, once you passed through immigration. There was no formality overseas then; you just went down to the dock and bought your ticket for the ship. I had five pounds with me. The pound was worth five dollars in those days. I had one or two addresses here and my brother was supposed to meet me [in] South Station.⁶²

Upon arrival, these contacts often provided temporary housing and further instruction on acquiring work. John Devlin was the son of an Irish immigrant to the North End who arrived in the late nineteenth century. He recalled the central role of the “Glen Guard House,” a combination boarding house, employment agency, and central social site for Irish immigrants in the North End. “When the greenhorns came over from Ireland, they were met at the boat in Charlestown or in East Boston. They'd be allowed to stay at the Glen Guard House for a week... They'd talk about conditions at home; they would exchange information, so after a while they had a vast network of information of all the immigrants coming from that particular section of the country... During that week, they had an employment committee which was going out to seek gainful employment for them.”⁶³

Employers might try to access this immigrant labor pool directly. For instance, Dan Doherty ran a coal yard in Dorchester. This employer “used to go over to East Boston and hire the greenhorns off the boat for very little pay.”⁶⁴ Because many factories had relocated from the center of Boston to its environs, picking up workers and shipping them out of Boston was common

ed. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 130–59; Judith E. Smith, *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940* (New York: SUNY Press, 1985). Rosenbloom argues that employer recruiting was essential to initially establishing many of the networks.

⁶² Kenneally, *South Boston*, 13.

⁶³ Roboff and Kenneally, *The North End*, 9.

⁶⁴ Kenneally, *Dorchester*, 16.

practice. Paul McCarthy was the descendent of Irish immigrants, and his relatives acquired immigrant laborers as soon as they arrived in Boston: “They were in the contracting business. They would come down to Boston and wait for the boats to come in with the immigrants. They’d bring them up to Marlboro to work in the shoe factories.”⁶⁵ Traveling this distance would often mean that these workers had to board out, often in lodgings rented from their employer, which could serve as means to extract more of their pay.⁶⁶

Employers also delegated local recruitment and hiring to intermediaries, such as foremen, contractors, padrones, or work gangs, who were well connected through immigrant networks. While exploitation was common, these personal connections could also become ties of patronage and organizational power. “One man on a work gang would take the initiative in negotiating with the employer for the group...After a while the company and the men recognized his value as an intermediary. He became the ‘Boss’ of his group of men...To keep his position, he had to keep getting jobs for his men...As long as he was meeting their needs, he could count on the support of his men. A successful boss...who turned to politics could even break local politicians.”⁶⁷ As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, Irish work gangs and Italian padrones were predecessors of both labor unions and political ward bosses that would come to dominate Boston politics in the next decades.

Some workers had little trouble finding work, and as we have seen, some were swept into work immediately upon arrival: “My father got a job the second day he was in the county...they were putting in a sewer on [W.] Ave and it was all pick & shovel then. He went out, got a pick and shovel

⁶⁵ Sari Roboff and Katie Kenneally, *Mission Hill* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1976), 11.

⁶⁶ Roboff and Kenneally, *The North End*, 13.

⁶⁷ Sari Roboff, *Boston’s Labor Movement: An Oral History of Work and Union Organizing* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1977), 14.

job. 10 hours a day, six days a week, 1.50 a day.”⁶⁸ However, these recent immigrants joined a pool of workers that led a precarious existence. Once a building or infrastructure project was over, they would often have to search for more work. Many workers sought employment directly at the factory gates, and were subject to the whims of employers, foremen, and production schedules. Eric Wartmaugh described his experience seeking employment at Walworth, a valve manufacturing company, in the 1890s.

They used to call it the madhouse. They had iron gates. The whistle blew at 7 o'clock and you're crossing the street and those gates closed, so you went into the hall and you stood there and the man telephoned upstairs. I called him my Uncle George... If the boss liked you he'd say, 'Well, send him up.' If he didn't he'd say, 'Tell him to come back at noontime.' So you could lose a half day's pay. I've seen men go in Monday and they didn't have many orders from the main office so they'd say, 'Well, come in Wednesday.' You could lose two or three days a week.⁶⁹

Work outdoors on streets, sewers, trolley lines and railways was even more precarious. Seasonal outdoor labor left many laborers piecing together employment for months of the year.

Employment agencies, or “intelligence offices,” were some of the few formal institutions that aided low-wage workers in finding work. First opening in Boston in the early nineteenth century, in 1879 there were over 75 licensed intelligence offices in the city, mostly for-profit enterprises.⁷⁰ Intelligence offices typically capitalized and formalized pre-existing immigrant and

⁶⁸ Kenneally, Millet, and Wick, *Hyde Park*, 16.

⁶⁹ Kenneally, *South Boston*, 21.

⁷⁰ “Intelligence Offices: How Seekers for Employment Secure Places,” *Boston Daily Globe (1872-1922)*, January 20, 1879; See also: Woong Lee, “Essays on Public and Private Employment Agencies in the United States, 1890-1940” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2009); Brian P. Luskey, “Special Marts: Intelligence Offices, Labor Commodification, and Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century America,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 3 (2013): 360–91.

social networks. For job seekers outside of these networks these agencies could be very important.⁷¹

However, the opportunities for deceiving and scamming potential clients were also great.

Intelligence offices were regulated by the state of Massachusetts starting in 1848, but personal testimony revealed a chiefly unregulated market in practice.⁷² Mrs. M. from Nova Scotia, who had moved to Boston in 1877 seeking employment after her husband died, wrote to the *Boston Herald*: “On my arrival [in Boston], seeing an advertisement that five Nova Scotia girls were wanted, I started for the place and upon entering met a lady who informed me that she had plenty of nice situations. I made an appointment for one and paid my fee. [Later that day, I] was very rudely told that there was none...I asked for my fee and was refused. I tried four others during the week and paid fees in all three of them, and the result was the same in all...”⁷³

Male Help and Female Help wanted ads began to appear in newspapers around the same period, placed by individuals or by employment agencies on behalf of their clients. Want ads in the newspapers, even if they only played a small role facilitating employment, help shed light on the qualities important to employers. Because most low-wage jobs tended to be learned quickly on the job, formal training or education was not required. More important were gender, age, religion, ethnicity, race, physical and behavioral traits. The want ads were already divided into “Male Help” and “Female Help” columns, reflecting the gender-segregated job market. Age ranges were specified:

⁷¹ Joshua Rosenbloom argues employment agencies occupied a “small, but important niche in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century labor markets.” Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work, Searching for Workers*, 78; Based on a WPA survey of workers in Philadelphia, Walter Licht found that only 5% of workers used the services of employment agencies. He also found that 4% of workers found work through want ads, although according to a 1919 study, 29% of African Americans found work through want ads. Walter Licht, *Getting Work: Philadelphia, 1840-1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 132–39.

⁷² Peleg Whitman Chandler, *The Charter and Ordinances of the City of Boston* (Boston: J.H. Eastburn, City Printer, 1850), 249.

⁷³ “Intelligence Offices: Some of the Abuses Practiced-A Hard Experience,” *Boston Daily Globe* (1872-1922), January 13, 1879.

“A girl, about 14 years old to take care of children and assist in house work,”⁷⁴ “a steady girl, 16-18, for general housework,”⁷⁵ “a middle-aged woman to take charge of a small family.”⁷⁶ Religion was a common qualifier, especially for women: “An experienced, Protestant parlor maid.”⁷⁷ For men, “American,” was the most common qualifier, especially when asking for young workers: “Two American boys,” “A young American lad.”⁷⁸ Ethnicity and race were also requested: “German preferred,”⁷⁹ “A Protestant girl, either American or Nova Scotian,”⁸⁰ “A colored boy to run a passenger elevator.”⁸¹ Personal behavioral traits were extremely common: “must be an industrious and sober man,”⁸² “must be of temperate habits,”⁸³ “a colored inside man: must be of good habits, pleasant and willing,”⁸⁴ “a neat girl,”⁸⁵ “a smart, honest girl for housework.”⁸⁶ For manual labor, physical abilities were specified: “Smart, able-bodied men for good jobs on farms,”⁸⁷ “stout men for laboring.”⁸⁸ Many of the ads for these jobs simply specified the job to be done: “Corset stitchers, at once,”⁸⁹ “Press girl, bushel girl, pocket makers and finisher,”⁹⁰ “Laborers, this morning.”⁹¹

⁷⁴ “Female Help,” *Boston Herald*, October 29, 1881.

⁷⁵ “Female Help,” *Boston Herald*, March 19, 1879.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ “Female Help,” October 29, 1881.

⁷⁸ “Male Help,” *Boston Herald*, October 29, 1881, 1881.

⁷⁹ “Female Help,” March 19, 1879.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ “Male Help,” October 29, 1881.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ “Female Help,” March 19, 1879.

⁸⁶ “Female Help,” *Boston Herald*, January 8, 1879.

⁸⁷ “Male Help,” *Boston Herald*, February 11, 1879.

⁸⁸ “Male Help,” *Boston Herald*, June 23, 1879.

⁸⁹ “Female Help,” *Boston Herald*, May 30, 1879.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Most of the workers in this world of work, as we have seen, had not been in school beyond primary school, and many recent immigrants were illiterate. Industrial schools, reformatories, and asylums might offer some instruction, but these moralistic institutions catered to a small fraction of the youth in Boston. Immigrant networks, often unscrupulous employment agencies, and direct recruitment facilitated their path to work. Formal schooling did not play a central role in how they found work. At the same time, when these laboring families did reflect on formal education, they often expressed a desire to send their children to school longer. Schooling was seen as a valuable experience and a means of social advancement. As will be explored in Chapter 2, rising rates of school attendance would provide instruction in both the specific technical skills required in expanding sectors of the economy and cultural traits preferred by employers.

The World of Artisans and Shopkeepers

A broad middle class of artisans, small proprietors, and store clerks made up nearly half of the male workforce and over one third of the female workforce in 1880. For families in this sector, pathways to employment were often structured by more formal institutions such as trade unions, or an extended period of informal apprenticeship alongside a practitioner. They might be first generation immigrants from Canada, England, or Germany, or second generation “Lace-curtain” or “Cut-glass” Irish immigrants.⁹² They lived in double or triple-decker houses in the South End, East Boston, South Boston, Charlestown, and increasingly the streetcar suburbs of Roxbury and Dorchester. Canadian immigrants made up 7% of Boston’s population and, in the next few decades, they would

⁹¹ “Male Help,” *Boston Herald*, May 30, 1879.

⁹² Ryan, *Beyond the Ballot Box*; Firey, *Land Use in Central Boston*.

come to rival the Irish for preeminence in the building trades. English and Scottish (7%), and German (4%) immigrants came to the U.S. to take advantage of the higher wages for positions in the trades such as machinists and mechanics. The wives of middle-class men conducted house work, and perhaps let out a few lodging rooms. A few families had servants. About 10% of Boston women (or a third of the female workforce) were engaged in these mid-level occupations themselves as dressmakers, milliners, store clerks, saleswomen, and small proprietors. These families belonged to a variety of social organizations that were a defining feature of this broad middle class: trade unions, churches, social clubs, benevolent organizations, and fraternal societies.⁹³ The sons and daughters on average attended school to the age of 15, and might attend one year or two of one of Boston's public high schools: the male-only English High School, the Girls' High School, or one of the co-ed High Schools incorporated from neighboring towns (Roxbury, Dorchester, West Roxbury, Charlestown and Brighton). A minority attended Catholic schools.⁹⁴

These families were also at the crux of the central transformation of the industrial economy and training for work. Artisans and tradesmen observed the effects of industrialization eliminating traditional occupations and modes of apprenticeship, and sought new ways to address the problem of training, provoking significant conflict. While some encouraged their children to pursue the trades, the majority of their sons and daughters chose to enter the fastest growing sector of the economy: white-collar employment as clerks, salesmen and women, and business managers. Shopkeepers and proprietors in this sector likewise observed challenges to previous modes of on-

⁹³ W. A. Greenough, *The Boston Business Directory for 1881* (Boston: W. A. Greenough & Co., 1881), 552–58. Priscilla Murolo, *The Common Ground of Womanhood: Class, Gender, and Working Girls' Clubs, 1884-1928* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Associated Charities of Boston, *A Directory of the Charitable and Beneficent Organizations of Boston.*; Ibid.; Greenough, *The Boston Business Directory for 1881*, 558–81.; Kane, *Separatism and Subculture*, 95–104

⁹⁴ Private Catholic schools enrolled about 10% of the school-aged population in Boston, while the majority of Irish Catholics attended the free public schools. Those who did attend Catholic schools tended to be second or third-generation Irish Catholics who had entered the middle and upper middle class. Paula M. Kane, *Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

the-job mentorship in growing company bureaucracies, and also advocated new forms of commercial and business training in schools. The dynamics within these two sectors, and the relative failure of industrial training compared to the relative success of training for white-collar work, would play a central role in restructuring paths to work in the decades to come.

The Trades

In 1880 Boston, about one quarter of working men and one quarter of working women were artisans in a variety of crafts and trades. Canadians, English, and Germans were overrepresented in these jobs. The families of artisans in 1880 tended to be better off than their laborer counterparts, and relied significantly less on their wives' or children's contributions to family income.⁹⁵ The women who worked in the trades were predominantly single or widowed.

The most common trades in Boston were the building trades (carpenters, builders, masons, bricklayers), the needle trades (tailors, dressmakers, milliners, seamstresses), and machine work (machinists, mechanics, engineers). In 1880, all of these trades were in the midst of changes in production processes and firm structure that characterized the second industrial revolution. Traditionally, aspiring male artisans would be apprenticed to a master craftsman, work their way up to journeyman, and go on to open their own shop as a master. In 1880, there were still many masters who were also proprietors of their own workshops. But through the nineteenth century, traditional craftsmen working in small shops were replaced by a small number of engineers and a

⁹⁵ According to the 1875 BSL report, 30% of fathers working in building trades also relied on "assistance" in the form of income from their wives or children, and an even lower percentage in the shop trades and metal workers, compared to 85% of laborers' families. Wright and Long, *Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1875*, 357.

larger number of factory operatives. Master craftsman might be able to capitalize on these changes by expanding their own businesses, but the majority became employees of larger establishments. As Boston boomed as a diversified manufacturing center during and after the Civil War, the trade union movement also strengthened. Boston was home to the first 8-hour-league led by Ira Steward and George McNeill in 1863.⁹⁶ The Boston Central Labor Union in 1878 was formed by these journeymen unions and affiliated with the Knights of Labor (K of L), and in 1886, the K of L membership in the Boston area had grown to 10,000 members and Boston was chosen as their “banner city.”⁹⁷ While the K of L held out a vision of an encompassing union of workers across skill-levels, races, and genders, the trade union movement was dominated by a “skilled aristocracy” of journeyman artisans who regulated entry to their trades. As we will see in Chapter 3, only the building trades were able to maintain this control through the twentieth century because of their particularly powerful position in certifying and facilitating job placement. In other areas, employers could effectively undercut craft union control and absorb training costs internally or shift them to schools.

Carpentry was the most common trade for men in Boston in 1880.⁹⁸ Carpenters were in demand as the city grew and suburban housing construction proceeded rapidly in an unregulated housing market. Many amateur carpenters would build one or two houses, perhaps constructing a boarding house next to their own home.⁹⁹ Others worked for contractors or other builders who themselves had apprenticed as a carpenter and set up their own businesses. Master craftsmen who

⁹⁶ McNeil would go on to become the first director of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor in 1869, the first state bureau to investigate and systematically gather data on labor conditions, with an explicit reformist agenda.

⁹⁷ Green and Donahue, *Boston's Workers*, 36.

⁹⁸ Robert A. Christie, *Empire in Wood: A History of the Carpenters' Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956); Mark Erlich, *With Our Hands: The Story of Carpenters in Massachusetts* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Walter Galenson, *The United Brotherhood of Carpenters: The First Hundred Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

⁹⁹ Rodwin, *Housing and Economic Progress: A Study of the Housing Experiences of Boston's Middle-Income Families*; Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*.

owned their own shops lived comfortably. William Rand was a 61-year-old carpenter-builder from New Hampshire. His lived in a single family home on Columbus Avenue in Roxbury with his wife, three children, one boarder, and two domestic servants.¹⁰⁰ The average carpenter lived more modestly: carpenters typically made \$10-\$12, or \$500-600 per year.¹⁰¹ Based on those surveyed in the BSL 1875 Report, carpenters often displayed several markers of middle class status. “No. 10” was an “American” carpenter who earned \$716 annually. He lived with his wife and four children in a 6-room tenement with “a small flower-garden attached.” His 15-year-old son also worked, earning an extra \$300 for the family. His 16-year-old daughter sometimes “helps the mother at home,” but also regularly attended school. The family had a carpeted parlor, a piano and a sewing machine. In addition to the standard bread, butter, coffee, tea, and potatoes, and meat or fish, this family also ate vegetables, cheese, and cake. The extra income, additional school attendance for children, items such as the piano and sewing machine, and more varied diet was typical of the average carpenter’s family.¹⁰²

Machinists designed, built, and operated machinery and did specialized metal work.¹⁰³ This was the second most common trade for men in Boston. Machinists, engineers and pattern makers made an average of \$13-15 per week, or \$700-\$800 per year, and occupied a similar economic position to those in the higher end of the building trades.¹⁰⁴ Machinists were at the center of the technological change transforming all major industries in the late nineteenth century, and were well

¹⁰⁰ Year: 1880; Census Place: Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts; Roll: 556; Family History Film: 1254556; Page:181C; Enumeration District: 666; Image: 0023

¹⁰¹ Wright, *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1879*, 69–75.

¹⁰² Wright and Long, *Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1875*, 224.

¹⁰³ In 1880, the term was interchangeable with mechanical engineers. Monte A. Calvert, *The Mechanical Engineer in America, 1830-1910: Professional Cultures in Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967); Edwin T. Layton, *The Revolt of the Engineers: Social Responsibility and the American Engineering Profession* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1971).

¹⁰⁴ Wright, *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1879*, 73.

positioned to capitalize on this transformation. In an ever-evolving technological landscape, some machinists made a business out of designing for inventors, or inventing machines themselves. W. R. Hanks, raised in Wellesley, ran his own shop at 135 Oliver Street, occupying the second floor of a large building. In addition to manufacturing locomotive tire heaters, ticket destroyers, brass naphtha vapor burners, and doing jobs for printers and bookbinders, he also manufactured a machine of his own design: a welt cutter for boot manufacturers that was put on the market in the fall of 1886.¹⁰⁵ The average machinist, by contrast, worked for a larger manufacturing company.¹⁰⁶ Walworth Manufacturing Company specialized in the production of iron, brass and steel valves, fittings, die plates, pipe cutters, wrenches, taps, and reamers. The company occupied 13 acres of land with over a half million feet of floor space in South Boston, and employed over 800 men.¹⁰⁷

The needle trades comprised almost one third of all the trades in Boston. Taken as a whole, the needle trades were 87% women. Dressmakers and milliners (hat-makers) were almost entirely women, and made up what historian Wendy Gamber has called the “female aristocracy of labor.”¹⁰⁸ Dressmakers and milliners had typically learned their trade by working as an apprentice for an established craftswoman in a small shop. They were predominantly single or widowed women from New England and Canada who had migrated to the city of Boston to take advantage of a larger customer base, and women dressmakers and milliners often developed a clientele of women in the wealthy districts and suburbs of Boston.¹⁰⁹ The typical dressmaker made between \$7-\$9 a week, or

¹⁰⁵ *Leading Manufacturers and Merchants of the City of Boston*, 276.

¹⁰⁶ Wright, *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1879*, 67–77.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Herndon, *Men of Progress: One Thousand Biographical Sketches and Portraits of Leaders in Business and Professional Life in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, ed. Edwin Monroe Bacon (Boston: New England Magazine, 1896), 188, 383.

¹⁰⁸ Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

¹⁰⁹ Of Boston dressmakers in 1880, 73% were single, 15% widowed, and 7% married and living with their spouse. *IPUMS*.

\$400-\$500, and the lowest paid seamstresses might barely make over \$4 a week, or \$200 per year.¹¹⁰

Dressmakers might run stores in downtown Boston, or go “out by the day” to visit their customers’ homes for measurements and fittings and produce custom-garments in their own homes.¹¹¹

Among Boston tailors, female tailors outnumbered their male counterparts 2:1.¹¹² Boston tailors of both sexes were predominantly Irish in 1880, although elite merchant tailors were commonly of New England stock. Merchant tailors linked the retail and wholesale business side of the trade, typically ran their own shops, and lived comfortably in a single family home, often with a servant.¹¹³ As more advanced sewing and textile machinery reshaped the industry, fewer tailors owned their own shops and a larger number worked in the shops and factories of others. At the top of the trade, the average clothing cutter might make between \$13-\$16 per week, or \$700-\$800 per year. The lowest paid women “finishers” who worked in these shops could make just \$3-\$5 a week, or \$150-\$250 per year. Most tailors led a modest existence. John Hurley was a tailor from Ireland who lived with his wife and six children in a two-family home in South Boston. His wife kept house, his eldest daughter Margaret was a tailor, and his 16-year-old son Richard was a tailor’s apprentice.¹¹⁴ As Hurley’s family demonstrates, passing down a trade to children was one very common way to enter this work.

¹¹⁰ Wright, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1884*, 79; Wright, *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1879*, 71.

¹¹¹ Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 31.

¹¹² *IPUMS*, 1880.

¹¹³ For example, John Cahon, was a 63-year-old tailor from England living with his wife, four children, and an Irish domestic servant in a single-family home in Roxbury. Year: 1880; Census Place: *Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: 560; Family History Film: 1254560; Page:254C; Enumeration District: 754; Image: 0289.

¹¹⁴ Year: 1880; Census Place: *Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: 556; Family History Film: 1254556; Page:236A; Enumeration District: 669; Image: 0134

Entering the Trades

While most artisans were native-born, many artisans from England, Germany, and Canada migrated to the U.S. to take advantage of the relatively higher wages in U.S. cities. While not in as high numbers as their low-wage counterparts, foreign craftspeople took advantage of similar international networks that facilitated their migration.¹¹⁵

Within the city of Boston, as in most other American cities, family networks were strong as facilitators of work into the trades. Sons often followed in their father's footsteps. The countless small establishments with "& Sons" appended to their name is just one indicator of this reality. An 1881 editorial in *The American Machinist* claimed: "Frequently a boy gets into the shop who is some friend or relative of either a director or stockholder of the concern."¹¹⁶ The census also provides evidence of these family connections. Of young carpenters still living at home, 58% had fathers who were also carpenters. Of young male tailors, 57% had fathers who were tailors. A larger percentage of female tailors came from families whose fathers were laborers (34%), indicating that female tailors tended to come from poorer families. Still, 19% had fathers who were tailors, whereas only 2% of fathers in Boston were tailors.¹¹⁷

Want ads for the trades, in addition to behavioral traits, frequently stressed experience, skill, and speed. "One who is used to working on four-handed work, red bottoms, iron bottom lasts, and is capable of tapping and heeling 8 pairs per day, every day."¹¹⁸ "First class sawyers, to run a cutting-oil saw," "three experienced paper hangers," "a first-class custom tailor to take charge of a back shop:

¹¹⁵ Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work, Searching for Workers*, 80–114.

¹¹⁶ "How to Make Room For Apprentices," *The American Machinist*, March 12, 1881, p. 8. Vol 4., No. 11.

¹¹⁷ Calculated from the pool of fathers living in the same household as their children. *IPUMS*, 1880.

¹¹⁸ "Male Help," May 30, 1879.

must be a man of good taste and judgment and capable of turning out first-class work.”¹¹⁹ “A man thoroughly familiar with running a moulding machine and band saw; none but first-class man need apply.”¹²⁰ “A [female] compositor to work on leaded brier, newspaper; one that can set a good proof.”¹²¹ The process of learning these skills primarily took place on the job.

Unlike most of the work of day laborers and factory operatives, learning a trade required years of specialized training. Youth would typically apprentice alongside a master craftsman. Apprenticeships had existed for centuries as a legal contract, similar to an indenture, between the family of the apprentice and master craftsman. Apprenticeship contracts were for a period of 3-7 years, during which the apprentice agreed to remain under the guardianship of the master craftsman, and the master was obligated to provide both instruction and room and board. A central function of the trade unions that were founded in the nineteenth century was to regulate the number of formal apprenticeships as a means of controlling the supply of labor into those trades.¹²² By contrast to apprenticeships in Britain or Germany, however, a weaker guild tradition, high social mobility, and a weak regulatory state hindered the growth of formal apprenticeships in the U.S. “Apprenticeship,” as it was used at the time, could refer to a range of both formal and informal arrangements.¹²³

Many of the craftsmen working in Boston in 1880 had received an apprenticeship when they were growing up. “Apprentice” was still one of the most common occupational listings for young boys in 1880. In 1880 there were 959 officially listed apprentices in Boston (899 boys, 60 girls),

¹¹⁹ “Male Help,” *Boston Herald*, November 7, 1881.

¹²⁰ “Male Help,” February 11, 1879.

¹²¹ “Female Help,” *Boston Herald*, September 27, 1879.

¹²² Paul Howard Douglas, *American Apprenticeship and Industrial Education* (New York: Columbia University, 1921); John Rogers Commons, *History of Labour in the United States*, vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1918), 270–94.

¹²³ Hal Hansen, “Caps and Gowns: Historical Reflections on the Institutions That Shaped Learning For and At Work, 1800-1945” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1997), 41–103.

making up about 2% of the sector of manufacturing and mechanical industries.¹²⁴ Most apprentices were between the ages of 15-19. They mainly came from the families of Canadian, English, and Irish manual laborers and artisans, with fewer from families of proprietors or professionals. One third of apprentices were in the same trade as their father.¹²⁵ In addition, many want ads in 1880 called for young men and women to learn a trade: “A young man of about 15 to learn the art of designing for calico printing; must be of good character and have a taste for drawing,”¹²⁶ “one picture frame maker; also a boy to learn trade,”¹²⁷ “one polisher; also, boys to learn trade,”¹²⁸ “a strong girl to learn on a press machine,”¹²⁹ “[female] apprentices for the tailoring business.”¹³⁰ These ads suggest that informal apprenticeship was still a common path into the trades.

Despite its persistence informally, apprenticeship as a legal arrangement was already in decline by the mid-nineteenth century. Employers complained about apprentices breaking their contract to leave and work for a different firm. Theodore L. Devinne was the President of the United Typothatae of America, a professional association and union of master printers. He explained: “To the master printers of book or job offices in our large cities the system is especially unfair. Of what use is it to them to carefully educate a lad in the trade who has the power, and who often uses it, to

¹²⁴ 48,591 workers total. Wright, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1884*, 14.

¹²⁵ Based on a sample of apprentices with identifiable trades, *IPUMS*, 1880. For example, Samuel Morris was a 15-year-old brushmaker’s apprentice living in Roxbury with his father, a brushmaker from Massachusetts, his mother and three younger siblings. Richard Hurley was a 16-year-old tailor’s apprentice from Massachusetts, living with his father, a tailor from Ireland, mom and five siblings in South Boston. Year: 1880; Census Place: Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts; Roll: 556; Family History Film: 1254556; Page:526.A; Enumeration District: 682; Image: 0718

¹²⁶ “Male Help,” *Boston Herald*, December 20, 1881.

¹²⁷ “Male Help,” *Boston Herald*, January 8, 1879.

¹²⁸ “Male Help,” *Boston Herald*, April 24, 1879.

¹²⁹ “Female Help,” *Boston Herald*, June 23, 1879.

¹³⁰ “Female Help,” *Boston Herald*, November 7, 1881.

leave his employer and take work in another State in which he cannot be molested?”¹³¹ They also blamed the courts for not upholding these contracts.¹³² Even more than the problem of legal enforcement, apprenticeship as a mode of learning was changing as the industrial world changed. With the increase of larger and less personalized workshops, this form of learning became less desirable, effective, and available. A printer describes: “The only boys in a printing establishment now are errand boys and copy-holders, neither of which calling leads to anything further... They are hired on weekly wages, and are discharged or leave without a moment's notice... No one instructs them systematically... [and] few indeed become pressmen.”¹³³

Trade journals complained about the destruction of the apprenticeship system by the same forms of deskilling that were devaluing their own crafts. An article in *Builder & Woodworker* argued, “In the former trades, crafts and industrial occupations, now past and gone by, a boy or girl could be turned to account at once as an apprentice; but how are we to apprentice a youth, now, to a steam engine, a telegraph instrument, or a shoe-pegging and a shoe-cutting machine?”¹³⁴ These changes in industry led foremen or supervisors to spend less time on actual instruction.¹³⁵ Employers might also find it in their interest to limit workers’ knowledge to specialized tasks, so they would be less likely to leave their establishment.¹³⁶ Native-born tradesmen also blamed immigrants for driving the destruction of the former apprenticeship system, as employers increasingly hired them as cheap

¹³¹ *The American Bookmaker: A Journal of Technical Art and Information: Publishers, Bookbinders, Printers, Lithographers, Blank-book Manufacturers And All Others Connected With Or Interested In Bookmaking* Vol. 7, No. 4 (October 1888): 101.

¹³² “The Apprenticeship System,” *The American Bookmaker* Vol 3., No. 5 (November 1886):149.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Quoted in “Industrial Education,” *The Carpenter* Vol. 1, No. 4. (August 1881): 4.

¹³⁵ “Why Some Mechanics Lack Independent Thought,” *American Machinist* Vol. 4, No.14 (April 2, 1881): 6.

¹³⁶ Henry K. Oliver and George E. McNeil, *Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1870-71*, Senate No. 150 (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter, State Printers, 1871), 228.

labor.¹³⁷ The concentration of workers, especially immigrant workers, in cities also fueled a preference for training in rural areas and small towns. Complaining that urban dwellers had a much harder time finding positions as apprentices, many recommended that young workers stay in the country to learn a trade in a small shop first.¹³⁸ Anti-immigrant sentiment was also perpetuated by the strong craft-based labor organizations, which reached their height in Boston in the late nineteenth century, that used barriers to entry to draw boundaries around a primarily white, native-born skilled aristocracy.

Through the 1880s, employers typically blamed the problem of training on trade unions limiting the number of apprenticeships. “The rules of trade unions exclude, even prohibit, boys from entering workshops... This is a serious evil.”¹³⁹ However, more union-friendly journals such as *The Carpenter* responded by blaming firms for not even taking on the full number of apprentices allowed by union regulations.¹⁴⁰ Contemporary and current scholars have substantiated the latter claim.¹⁴¹ In a highly mobile environment, and with many specialized jobs, many employers did not consider it worthwhile to invest in the training of young employees. The problem of training for the trades

¹³⁷ Want Ads reveal the extent to which employers still preferred “American” boys over immigrants as apprentices: “An American boy, about 16 years of age, who resides with his parents, to learn the gold beating trade.”; “An American (Yankee) boy 15 or 16, of good address, to learn the sign painting trade.” “Male Help,” *Boston Herald*, August 4, 1881.; “Male Help,” *Boston Herald*, September 27, 1879.

¹³⁸ *The American Bookmaker*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (February 1886): 51. An 1870 BSL study of women workers in Boston noted that women from rural New England who had learned one of the needle trades at home had an advantage over the girls growing up in urban homes. Oliver and McNeil, *Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1870-71*, 228–29. Comparative rates of rural and urban education has long been the subject of historical scholarship but has more recently been taken up again. See Nancy Beadie, *Education and the Creation of Capital in the Early American Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz, “Education and Income in the Early Twentieth Century: Evidence from the Prairies,” *The Journal of Economic History* 60, no. 3 (2000); John L. Rury, *Education and Women’s Work: Female Schooling and the Division of Labor in Urban America, 1870-1930* (New York: State University of NY Press, 1991); Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

¹³⁹ “Without a trade,” *Carpentry and Building: A Monthly Journal*, Vol. 1., No. 9 (September 1879); 166.

¹⁴⁰ “Apprentices,” *The Carpenter* Vol 1., No. 2 (June 1881); “Why Apprenticeships are Scarce,” *The American Machinist* (April 30th, 1881): 8;

¹⁴¹ John Commons et al., *History of Labour in the United States*, Vol. 1., 284.

would continue to receive public attention and drive new experiments in industrial training regimes in the subsequent decades, but as Chapter 3 will describe, the creation of a regulated training regime would face significant obstacles.

Early signs of the difficulty of trade training were already present in 1880, as fewer and fewer young people entered the trades.¹⁴² Boston artisans in 1880 were predominately middle-



Figure 1.10

Source: IPUMS 1880 100%.

and old-aged. Figure 1.10 depicts the percentage male laborers, carpenters, and clerks of each age in Boston in 1880. Less than 2% of all male carpenters were 20 years old or younger, and the median age of a carpenter was 40.

Although the overall women's workforce was younger, only 18% of dressmakers, milliners or seamstresses were 20 years or below.¹⁴³ Instead, the most popular occupations for youth were white-

¹⁴² Oscar Handlin and Mary Flug Handlin, *Facing Life: Youth and the Family in American History* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1971); Kett, *Rites of Passage*.

¹⁴³ Printing was one trade that was significantly younger: 26% of male printers and 31% of female printers were 20 or younger. But printing was likely the exception that proved the rule. Work in printing offices—especially for typesetters and proofreaders—was more akin to white-collar office work than to work in a carpenter's or machinist's shop. As such,

collar office and sales jobs. Of the working sons of craftsmen, 31% pursued clerical and sales work compared to 28% in trades.¹⁴⁴ Figure 1.11 depicts the age distribution of female domestic workers, dressmakers, and clerks; like men, office workers were the youngest on average. City youth entering white-collar jobs were attracted to cleaner, indoor working environments, less arduous labor, and



Figure 1.11

Source: IPUMS 1880 100%.

higher prestige. As Illeen DeVault has argued, craftsmen were inclined to send their daughters into clerical and sales jobs, as this work would enhance their social status more than would domestic service or factory work.¹⁴⁵

Craftsmen were aware of these trends, and might not always encourage their sons and daughters to follow in their own footsteps. “D” was a 37-year-old carpenter in Massachusetts with a family of five, working 60 hours per week in the summer and 54 in the winter. As someone who had worked in the trade his entire adult life, he never expected “to have a house earned by a day’s wage” and

working in a printing office might offer some of the same opportunities of social advancement as being a store or office clerk. *IPUMS*, 1880.

¹⁴⁴ *IPUMS*, 1880.

¹⁴⁵ Illeen A. DeVault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor: Class and Clerical Work in Turn-Of-The-Century Pittsburgh* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990).

“does not desire his son to follow in the same business.”¹⁴⁶ Other fathers in better-off circumstances, however, might see their own path as a lucrative possibility for their own children. One machinist employed by a cotton manufacturing company who had himself served a three-year apprenticeship said he “would rather encourage a son to enter the same trade, after being well-educated, if he was disposed to do so.” Another mechanic wrote: “My two older boys have learned trades, and I think they are the better able to get through life in consequence, though I could have afforded to send them to the higher schools.”¹⁴⁷

The pages of trade journals in the 1880s were filled with complaints about young boys choosing white-collar work over learning a trade. As one machinist explained: “We have been vexed beyond expression, when some bright, smart boy has been buzzing around the shop; and we engaged him in some conversation—the subject being broached about coming into the shop as an apprentice. He has come back to the shop in a day or two, and said his mother and sisters did not like to have him come into the shop to work, because it was such dirty, greasy work. We have pressed him as to his idea of choosing some aim in life, when the matter became settled in this way: Oh! I am to go through high school, then to college for a little while, then study law.” As this machinist interpreted the situation, not only was the trade too dirty, but young men were losing respect for the dignity of labor: “Too many of our boys are silently taught...to shun labor, and think trade a disgrace.” Instead, they cared about making money, and mothers and sisters only perpetuated this materialism: “their dainty sisters would not accept the attention of a pushing young mechanic, because his purse is not deep enough to enable him to live in style.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Oliver and McNeil, *Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1870-71*, 596.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 587.

¹⁴⁸ “Letters from Practical Men: An Apprentice Plan” *American Machinist*, March 26, 1881. See also: “Why Apprentices are Scarce,” *American Machinist*, April 30th, 1881. John G. Baker, a leather manufacturer, similarly explained the reason

Part of the blame was placed on the craftsmen themselves, particularly the masters who started their own shops and businesses. At a Convention of the National Retail Shoe Dealers Association in New York, the Treasurer, Mr. Hibbett chided: “You...are making one of the grandest mistakes that was ever made in this or any other country. You do not give your children a practical education, but a flowery and superficial one...The young sons of the successful gentlemen of to-day are ashamed of the professions of their fathers, and shoe-making is one of the lost arts. We have no shoe-makers.”¹⁴⁹

Much of the blame for these problematic attitudes fell on schools. A common tactic was to poke fun at the pretensions of “scholarship” taught in public schools. The *Manufacturer and Builder* reprinted “with a hearty endorsement” a piece in *Popular Science Monthly* describing the “inefficacy and impractical character of the training given in the common schools...[traced] to the silly affectation of many pseudo-educators that it is a mark of devotion to pure scholarship to ignore the practical and the beneficial in education.”¹⁵⁰ Another complaint was that these schools prejudiced youth against the trades, in favor, not chiefly of airy scholarly pursuits, but of business pursuits. As an editorial in *The Carpenter* argued, “Young men look with scorn upon a trade and regard manual labor as degrading...because of the commercial education of our schools, which fit young men mainly for mercantile pursuits.”¹⁵¹ A carpenter claimed that the current “system of education...trains youth to the notion that the most respectable occupation is that in which a man becomes rich the quickest...[and] that ‘to make money’ is the chief object of man. The only hope at present is in

the “well-to-do man” did not want his boy to enter leather making was that it was “it is too dirty, too filthy. *Shoe & Leather Reporter*, Jan 16, 1879.

¹⁴⁹ “The Convention in New York of Retail Shoe Dealers,” *Shoe & Leather Reporter*, Feb 18, 1886, 284.

¹⁵⁰ “The Chambers Humbug Furnishes the Text for a Short Sermon,” *Manufacturer & Builder*, February, Vol 12, No. 2 (1880): 26.

¹⁵¹ *The Carpenter*, Vol 1., No. 3. (July 1881)

substituting industrial education for the mercantile and banking house education of our schools.”¹⁵²

As these criticisms suggest, by 1880, common schools and public high schools had developed reputations as training schools for business occupations, and were contributing to the denigration of the trades.¹⁵³

Popular advice literature echoed the concern that schools were biasing boys against the trades and toward white-collar work.¹⁵⁴ For example, *Our Business Boys* was an 1884 advice manual based on a survey of businessmen by a Reverend Francis Edward Clark. As Clark wrote, “All our young men want to go behind a counter; none want to go behind a work-bench.”¹⁵⁵ This choice reflected the wrong attitude toward labor, and advice literature promoted the virtues of craftsmanship and the dignity of labor. A similar manual stated: “It is far better work to make particularly good horse shoes than to practice law or medicine only tolerably well.”¹⁵⁶ The trades were promoted as stable and secure paths to lucrative work, as opposed to risky business enterprises

¹⁵² “Apprentices,” *The Carpenter*, Vol 1., No. 4. (August 1881): 1.

¹⁵³ Herbert M. Kliebard, *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); James D. Anderson, Harvey Kantor, and David B. Tyack, *Work, Youth, and Schooling: Historical Perspectives on Vocationalism in American Education* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Edwin Garfield Knepper, *History of Business Education in United States* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1941).

¹⁵⁴ Before the field of vocational guidance developed in the early twentieth century, most advice literature addressed to youth was written by clergymen, and focused on sinful behavior and the moral pitfalls of youth. More practical manuals started to appear in the late nineteenth century, but retained a focus on moral behavior. For example, see George Cary Eggleston, *How to Educate Yourself: With Or Without Masters* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1872); Sir Arthur Helps, *Essays Written in the Intervals of Business* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1871); George Cary Eggleston, *How to Make a Living: Suggestions Upon the Art of Making, Saving, and Using Money* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1875); Cunningham Geikie, *Entering on Life: A Book for Young Men* (New York: J. Pott & Company, 1888); William Channing Gannett, *Blessed Be Drudgery: And Other Papers* (Glasgow, Scotland: David Bryce & Son, 1890); Rev. Francis Edward Clark, *Danger Signals: The Enemies of Youth* (Boston: Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, 1885); Rev. Francis Edward Clark, *Our Business Boys: What Eighty-Three Business Men Say* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1884); Rev. Lyman Abbott, *How to Succeed: In Public Life, as a Minister, as a Physician, as a Musician, as an Engineer, as an Artist, in Mercantile Life, as a Farmer, as an Inventor, and in Literature* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1882); Orison Swett Marden, *Pushing to the Front: Or, Success Under Difficulties* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1894); William Augustus Mowry, *Talks with My Boys* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1892).

¹⁵⁵ Clark, *Our Business Boys*, 25.

¹⁵⁶ Eggleston, *How to Make a Living*, 27.

fueled by unlikely dreams of success.¹⁵⁷ Similar arguments were made in a parallel body of Catholic publications, targeting middle-class Irish Bostonians in particular. Along with promoting the dignity of trades, they repeatedly condemned hubris and arrogance. In one back-to-school themed advice column for children in the *Boston Pilot* in September of 1880, reflecting on the question “What shall I study?” the columnist wrote: “The great objection which all ignorant persons and many wise men make to general education is that it causes young persons to be conceited, and destroys that docility without which it is useless to try to learn.” The columnist advised that “if you ever should enter the works, do not assume airs of superiority on account of what you have learned from books. Only practice makes perfect in a trade or profession.”¹⁵⁸

Despite these pleas, young people still flocked to white-collar positions. Many trade journals repeatedly made the argument that these unfavorable attitudes and the perceived lower status of the trades could not be changed without addressing the real root of the issue: low wages. Apprentices should be provided with sufficient wages: “The real difficulty is that...many ambitious youths have no means to help themselves while learning the trade.”¹⁵⁹ Most importantly, the jobs to which these apprenticeships led should be made more appealing. As an *American Machinist* editorial in 1881 argued: “Just so long as manual labor is poorly paid and degraded by low wages and long hours, and just so long as it is enslaved by the wage system which makes it a serf to the ‘boss,’ just that long will it be shunned by the masses of young men.”¹⁶⁰ As we will see in subsequent chapters, while some

¹⁵⁷ “There is a prevalent belief among young men that there are more and better chances for advancement in commerce than in mechanical pursuits. They mistake their own vague imaginings for well-grounded hopes...they forget that success of this kind can come to but one man out of many thousands...The mechanic, on the other hand, brings a definite skill to bear on the problem of money-making.” Quoting George Eggleston, William Drysdale, *Helps for Ambitious Boys* (New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1899), 74–75.

¹⁵⁸ This column was called “Our Boys and Girls,” written by “Our Tender” and addressed to her “industrious ants.” “Our Boys and Girls,” *The Pilot*, September 11, 1880, 5.

¹⁵⁹ “Why Apprenticeships are Scarce,” *The American Machinist*, April 30, 1881, 8.

¹⁶⁰ *The Carpenter*, Vol 1., No. 4. (August, 1881): 1.

craft unions were able to secure improved working conditions, on the whole their power within larger manufacturing firms declined and the sons of union members, if they could, pursued white-collar and managerial positions instead.

Alternative Modes of Training

Concerns about the viability of apprenticeship to train workers in the trades helped generate a great deal of debate among employers and trade unions alike about how to attract American workers into these positions and what their training would consist in. For specialized jobs that required the use of particular machinery, on-the-job training was still the only viable option. “Shop culture” was also privileged by established master craftsmen, as learning a trade was more about acquiring technical skills, but also the habits and behaviors of experienced artisans. Many established craftsmen also promoted self-education as the necessary substitute for a deteriorating apprenticeship system.¹⁶¹ Trade journals and periodicals were stocked with techniques of the trades.¹⁶² Some artisans made reference books from articles clipped from these journals.¹⁶³ Printed manuals and practical textbooks become popular in this period.¹⁶⁴ As printed materials became more widely circulated and used, they became part of a new fetishized self-made mechanic. One letter describing the qualities of a

¹⁶¹ Joseph F. Kett, *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America, 1750-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

¹⁶² “Letters from Practical Men,” *The American Machinist*, April 23, 1881, 4.

¹⁶³ “Ready Reference Book” *The American Machinist*, July 9, 1881, 6; “Letters from Practical Men: Learning Mech’l Drawing,” *The American Machinist*, May 28, 1881, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Such as Robert Grimshaw, *Saws: Their History, Development, Action, Classification* (Philadelphia: E. Claxton & Company, 1882); Robert Grimshaw, *“Shop Kinks”: A Book Entirely Different From Any Other on Machine-Shop Practice* (New York: N.W. Henley & Co., 1896); Robert Grimshaw, *The Miller, Millwright, and Millfurnisher: A Practical Treatise* (New York: H. Lockwood, 1882); Robert Grimshaw, *The Steam-Boiler Catechism: A Practical Book for Steam Engineers, and for Firemen, Owners and Makers of Boilers of Any Kind* (New York: Woolfall, Clark & Zugalla, 1888).

draftsman clarified: “I do not mean...draftsmen who can show diplomas of a scientific or technical school, and who have memorized the methods of its professors, but draftsmen who have worked their way up from apprentice boys, using the gifts given them by their Creator, and diligent study after shop-hours, either in the mercantile and public library or by their own candle light, until each is considered competent to take possession of a drafting room.”¹⁶⁵ Self-education was promoted as the means of social advancement in the rapidly transforming world of the crafts.

Schools were also alternatives to apprenticeship. However, the position of trade unions was divided on this prospect. On the one hand, they saw the need for the provision of quality training that they believed would elevate the standards of the trades and draw in more young people. At the same time, they sought to maintain control of the training process that was one of the primary sources of their workplace power. As we will see in Chapter 3, trade unions fiercely resisted private trade schools, in particular those operated or funded by employers themselves, that they believed would be used to prejudice workers against unions and to train scabs and future managers rather than craftsmen.¹⁶⁶ As one *Carpenter* article sarcastically put it: “Some advanced so fast, that after a few weeks [the employer] made foremen of them, and commissioned them to butcher men as well as wood.”¹⁶⁷ Trade unions were more amenable to public school options for “industrial” training, which they had some ability to control and regulate, including limiting instruction to those already employed as artisans or only teaching rudimentary skills instead of specialized trade knowledge. *The Carpenter* argued that a “compulsory industrial education” would afford “our school children a chance to learn the rudiments of trades as they now learn the rudiments of a commercial

¹⁶⁵ “Preserving Drawings for Use,” *The American Machinist*, June 25, 1881, 6.

¹⁶⁶ Commons, *History of Labour in the United States*, 3:274.; “Contractors and Work in Philadelphia” *The Carpenter*, June 1882, 6.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

education.”¹⁶⁸ Industrial education would help elevate the dignity of labor, and “present mechanical employment as equally honorable with mercantile, literary, and professional pursuits.”¹⁶⁹

Overall, however, trade unions were advocates of a general curriculum in the public schools, and advocates of making the exclusive realm of college preparatory schooling accessible to all. Labor unions also favored compulsory education as part of an anti-child labor platform. In 1881 at the first convention of what would become the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the founding constitution stated: “We are in favor of the passage of such legislative enactments as will enforce by compulsion the education of children.”¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the Boston Central Labor Union “heartily and unqualifiedly” endorsed a proposal for a free public university in 1888.¹⁷¹ In 1880, craftsmen sent their sons and daughters to school at similar rates as the sons and daughters of clerks and small proprietors. Artisans did not discourage young people from an education, rather, they believed all education, even college, should be a public good available to all students, rich or poor.

While artisans focused on the problem of training for the trades, the changes in education on the ground already revealed a larger revolution in training for work. As the trade journals indicated, the formerly exclusively college preparatory curriculum of public high schools of the early nineteenth century was being transformed into commercial education that churned out clerks. As clerical and entry-level business positions rose in the economy at large, more students sought access to these white-collar jobs through formal educational institutions.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in “Industrial Education,” *The Carpenter*, October 1882, 3.

¹⁶⁹ “Industrial Education,” *The Carpenter*, August 1882, 4.

¹⁷⁰ *Labor and Education: A Brief Outline of the Resolutions and Pronouncements of the American Federation of Labor in Support of the General Principles and Practices of Education from 1881-1938* (Washington D.C.: American Federation of Labor, 1939), 7.

¹⁷¹ “The proposition lately introduced into the common council to provide a university course in the public school system of Boston will most benefit the children of working people of this city, thus giving them its benefit of a college education without the attendant expense.” “The Interests of Labor,” *The Boston Herald*, July 30, 1888, 2. While several proposed bills to establish a public university in Boston came up in the next decades, they were repeatedly thwarted by leaders of private universities who saw a public university as direct competition for student enrollment. Richard Freeland, *Academia’s Golden Age: Universities in Massachusetts, 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Shopkeepers and White Collar Workers

Along with artisans, Boston's middle class included a large number of small proprietors, clerical and sales workers, about 20% of working men and 9% of working women.¹⁷² Massachusetts and New England natives were overrepresented in these occupations. These workers are classified as "white collar" in most secondary literature, but this label covers a vast range of occupations, from the wealthiest capitalist to the poorest fruit peddler. It is important to differentiate the major occupational groups that belonged to this middle class stratum.

About 5% of working men in Boston were small proprietors. The most common occupations were traders and dealers in groceries and produce.¹⁷³ These men might run their own store or a market stall downtown and belong to one of Boston's trade associations, such as the Boston Grocer's Association, the Boston Fruit & Produce Exchange, or the Boston Fish Bureau. The families of these small proprietors lived in double or single family homes, in the South End close to business downtown, or on the outskirts of Boston. Sons, nephews, and brothers work as store clerks in their family business, or might take advantage of their family contacts to secure a position in a related industry.¹⁷⁴

About 2% of working women were listed in the census as small proprietors: "Keeps Store," "Retail Grocer," "Variety Store," "Candy Store"; another 1% were listed as boarding or lodging-

¹⁷² I have based these estimates on a combination of the OCC1950 scheme, the name of the occupation as manually written into the manuscript census, as well as tracing a sample of workers back into the manuscript census to learn more about their family circumstances.

¹⁷³ *IPUMS*, 1880.

¹⁷⁴ Albert Gay was a Grocer from New Hampshire, living in a single-family home in the South End with his wife, three children, and one servant in 1880; his son Richard became a wholesale grocer in his 20s. Year: *1880*; Census Place: *Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: *558*; Family History Film: *1254558*; Page: *23B*; Enumeration District: *713*; Image: *0354*.

house keepers, predominantly natives of New England and Canada.¹⁷⁵ Most of these housekeepers ran lodging houses in the South End, a densely populated residential area for men and women connected to downtown commerce and industry.¹⁷⁶

In 1880, clerical and sales workers – clerks in stores, salesmen, bookkeepers, and accountants—encompassed 15% of the male and 6% of the female workforce, and was the fastest growing sector of the economy. The term “clerk” covered a multiplicity of jobs that were in the midst of the transformations wrought by the growth of large-scale industry and trade. In the early nineteenth century, a clerkship was a form of apprenticeship for a mercantile establishment, and clerks worked alongside merchants to assist with orders, payments, and accounts. They might work with a few other accountants or bookkeepers in a counting room, office, or store room downtown. Like an apprentice, they often looked forward to becoming a partner of a firm or running a business of their own. As Brian Luskey argues, “young men in nineteenth-century America depended for their advancement on revealing their good character to patrons who would use their own connections to propel these youthful associates into well-paid jobs.”¹⁷⁷

With the transformation of production and transportation in the late nineteenth century, the clerical work that accompanied business also multiplied. Clerks were more likely to work for larger

¹⁷⁵ The specific occupational titles were accessed through *IPUMS*, 1880 sample. In the IPUMS OCC1950 scheme, boarding and lodging housekeepers are placed under the “service” census category, presumably because of the extra female labor of housework, cooking, and cleaning that typically came with the job. However, female boarding and lodging-house keepers were in effect running a small business, in addition to all the extra housework, so I have reclassified them as proprietors.

¹⁷⁶ Lodging houses facilitated an ethnically and socio-economically diverse mix of residents in the South End: in Robert Wood’s 1898 study of the South End, a detailed demographic map shows Canadian carpenters living next to New England clerks next to Irish laborers. Robert Archey Woods, *Americans in Process: A Settlement Study* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1903), 96–97.

¹⁷⁷ Brian P. Luskey, “‘What Is My Prospects?’: The Contours of Mercantile Apprenticeship, Ambition, and Advancement in the Early American Economy,” *Business History Review* 78, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 699; See also: Brian P. Luskey, *On the Make: Clerks and the Quest for Capital in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: NYU Press, 2010); Jerome P. Bjelopera, *City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Allan Stanley Horlick, *Country Boys and Merchant Princes: The Social Control of Young Men in New York* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1975).

firms, in larger teams of staff, and take on more specialized tasks. After 1870, women began entering these positions in large numbers.¹⁷⁸ At the lowest level of office work, errand girls and messengers relayed information; in retail, “cash girls” and “cash boys” carried bills, change, and receipts when sales were made. These jobs could pay as little as \$2 a week (or \$100 per year) and were most likely to be occupied by second-generation Irish and women employees.¹⁷⁹ Store clerks, copyists, cashiers, canvassers, salesmen and saleswomen were higher up in the hierarchy: men might earn \$5 per week in entry-level positions, but could move up to \$10 or \$15 within a few years.¹⁸⁰ Cashiers would conduct sales, copyists would transcribe letters and bills, canvassers, salesmen and saleswomen were employed in stores or sent to travel—known as commercial travellers or “drummers”—to promote their companies’ goods. At the highest level, commission clerks, bookkeepers and accountants worked alongside merchants and manufacturers, and these positions were almost entirely filled by men with parents from Massachusetts and New England.¹⁸¹ While male bookkeepers and accountants might earn \$15-\$20 per week, or \$800-\$1000 annually, the average female bookkeeper only earned \$6-\$7 per week, or \$300-\$350 annually, in Boston in 1884.¹⁸²

One diary of a traveling salesman provides a window into the daily routines and cultural norms of this middle-class world.¹⁸³ Augustus Ayling was born in Boston in 1841; his parents were

¹⁷⁸ Margery W. Davies, *Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Lisa M. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); DeVault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor*.

¹⁷⁹ Wright, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1884*, 77.; IPUMS.

¹⁸⁰ Frederick Orin Bartlett, *One Way Out: A Middle-Class New-Englander Emigrates to America* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1911), 7–10; Wright, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1884*, 77.

¹⁸¹ IPUMS.

¹⁸² Wright, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1884*, 77.

¹⁸³ Augustus D. Ayling Papers, 1971.028. Diary, 1867. Box 1, Envelope 1. New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH. Accessed July, 2014.

both from Massachusetts. His father had worked as an actor. After the Civil War, from 1867-1910, Augustus worked for R. P. Hall & Co., a hair renewal company based in Nashua, New Hampshire, selling goods all around New England. In his diary from 1867-69, he detailed his day-to-day travels that ranged from 50-100 miles per week. He moved to a new inn, tavern, boarding house, or hotel every few days. He was at the mercy of rain, sleet, and snow, a horse-drawn “sleigh” that might break, or horses that might get sick, which would prevent him from traveling for days on end. While on the road, he would receive supplies and instructions from his company about his next destinations at the local depot or station, and he would send back completed business reports. During the weekdays, he met clients and dealers in town. He received payment, often \$100 at a time, in the mail, but often expressed anxiety about receiving his money: “I am short on cash and fear I shall run aground. It ain’t my fault.”¹⁸⁴ When he could, he sent a few dollars back home to his mother. While traveling made him lonely, he spent his evenings playing billiards, dominoes, or crib, playing guitar, smoking, dancing, chatting with fellow boarders in the bar room, or perhaps attending a circus show, baseball game, or lecture. Several times he attended a minstrel show like “Comical Brown’s,” or saw black entertainers in the hotel: “they got some darkeys in with violins and violin-cellos and they played very well.”¹⁸⁵ He was highly literate and liked to read and write: on the weekends he would write letters to his family and friends, and read periodicals like *Harpers Weekly*, novels, detective stories, and popular history.¹⁸⁶

Augustus Ayling was part of overlapping social circles that were representative of his middle-class status. While on the road, he crossed paths with businessmen acquaintances— a “Fox Sewing

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, Feb 23, 1867.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, Jan. 29, 1867.

¹⁸⁶ He mentions the examples of Victor Hugo’s *Temptations*, Reverend D. C. Eddy’s *Europe*, John Abbott’s *The History of the Civil War in America*, Edouard Laboulaye’s *Fairy Tales*, and Water’s *Diary of a Detective*, among others. Ibid.

Machine Agent,” or a “Rennes Magic Oil” Agent. In 1864 he had been initiated into the Ancient York Lodge of the Masons and he regularly encountered fellow Masons along his business routes. He describes many instances of being “hailed” by a brother and making friends, and even attending Lodge meetings with them when he had the time.

The judgments and attitudes expressed in Ayling’s diary reveal a portrait of a man who sought to maintain an elevated sense of propriety and status, who sought the company of other members of his middle-class world, and who looked down on both entertainment and people whom he considered cheap and vulgar. A magician’s show was “Humbug”; a village Demosthenes & Cicero debate on the subject “Is the world advancing in morality?” was “a big display of eloquence & bad grammar.”¹⁸⁷ One night he “got acquainted with a Mr. Pinny of NY in the liquor trade and played a game of billiards with him – he didn’t amount to much—can talk of nothing but women.”¹⁸⁸ One night: “there was a mighty cheap crowd of boarders (something after the style of Card Strippers).”¹⁸⁹ Ayling’s comments also reflect the role of ethnic and racial exclusion in policing the boundaries of the middle class. When staying in Hotel O’Brien, he wrote: “Deuced poor accommodations – Irish.”¹⁹⁰ Mr. Tracy, an assistant teacher from West Stockbridge, on the other hand, was “a very fine fellow,” and he was similarly impressed with Mr. Lawrence, who “is a man of education and has travelled extensively...had a very pleasant and instructive talk.”¹⁹¹

Entering Business

¹⁸⁷ Augustus D. Ayling Papers, 1971.028. Diary, 1867, entry March 22. Box 1, Envelope 1. New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH. Accessed July, 2014.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, May 9, 1867.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, Jan 4, 1867.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, Oct. 25, 1867.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, Sep. 18, 1867.

Like artisans, many children of small businessmen followed the footsteps of their parents into the business world.¹⁹² Beyond these pathways, want ads reveal some common forms of entrance. “A young man of ability to grow up in a counting room.”¹⁹³ “Young man of education and ability to grow up in office of importing and jobbing business.”¹⁹⁴ Like an apprenticeship in a trade, “growing up” in an office, store, or counting room was the typical way to learn the business.

In 1880, practical experience in white-collar occupations mattered far more than formal education.¹⁹⁵ The President of the National Shoe Retailers Association said: “Observation has shown that for success in business the man with a common school education [and] much knowledge of the world and human nature, outstrips the man of high literary and scientific attainments almost without effort...I should not object to a salesman because he was classically educated, but I should not consider it an important qualification.”¹⁹⁶ As we saw in trade journals, it was dedication and willingness to learn, not formal schooling, that was the most valuable trait for young people to possess.

At the same time, want ads do indicate the specific job skills preferred by employers. Penmanship, writing, reading, and mathematics were some of the most important: “A young man about 18 years of age as entry clerk in wholesale fancy dry goods house; must be rapid penman,

¹⁹² Edward Aiken was an 18-year-old store clerk from Massachusetts living in Roxbury in a home with two servants; his father was a wholesale shoe dealer. Year: 1880; Census Place: Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts; Roll: 560; Family History Film: 1254560; Page:198D; Enumeration District: 751; Image: 0178.

¹⁹³ “Male Help,” August 4, 1881.

¹⁹⁴ “Male Help,” February 11, 1879.

¹⁹⁵ Eggleston, *How to Educate Yourself*, 2.

¹⁹⁶ *How to Manage a Retail Shoe Store* (Boston: Boot and Shoe Recorder, 1888), 53.

quick and correct at figures. Address in own handwriting.”¹⁹⁷ “A lady bookkeeper; must write a good business hand.”¹⁹⁸ These were the technical skills that would increasingly be taught in formal educational institutions.

In addition to technical skills, want ads indicate the type of behavioral traits required for both entry-level and more advanced positions. For salesmen who worked in stores, politeness was crucial. “An American gentleman of several years business experience; must be very polite and know how to carry himself with lady customers.”¹⁹⁹ References were often required to attest to candidates’ trustworthiness and reliability: “A boy, age not less than 15, of American parentage, who can offer perfect evidence of trustworthiness in the way of recommendation.”²⁰⁰ For those entrusted with important business transactions—either in office work, sales, or especially long-distance travel—reliability was an important trait for which employers wanted to have evidence. “Americans parentage” was often preferred and was likely, in the eyes of the predominantly Yankee employers, a proxy for trustworthiness.

While established middle-class families would be able to pass down these cultural and behavioral norms to their children, a growing industry of advice literature marketed itself to lower-middle class men and women with aspirations of social mobility. Tellingly, these manuals promoted the same virtues of the dignity of labor as the trades. However, while the trade journals cast mercantile pursuits as the problem, these manuals sought to turn business and sales into the moral equivalent of an honest trade. The business respondents of F. C. Clark’s *Our Business Boys* repeatedly stressed what Clark called “The Little Virtues”: hard work, honesty, truthfulness, piety, self-denial,

¹⁹⁷ “Male Help,” November 7, 1881.

¹⁹⁸ “Female Help,” January 8, 1879.

¹⁹⁹ “Male Help,” April 24, 1879.

²⁰⁰ “Male Help,” August 4, 1881.

and thrift. The “Rocks of Danger” were dime novels and “bad literature,” “club rooms,” “low theaters,” “Sabbath breaking,” intemperance, cigarettes, greed, and extravagance.²⁰¹ The reputation of the business world was to lure men into risky enterprises with false promises of success. Advice-givers like Clark sought to correct this bad reputation, and disabuse boys of the notion that wealth could be attained so easily: “The commercial traveler you have in mind probably wears a very long ulster, and a big diamond ring, and almost as large a shirt stud as a hotel clerk, and he smokes very fragrant Havanas, and stops at the best hotels, and travels all over the country, and seems to have a really good time.” But in fact, the best commercial travellers were “quiet, modest, active businessmen.”²⁰² The cultural and behavioral norms promoted in this literature reflected the middle-class qualities preferred by employers, cast in terms of moral dictates. They also reflected a conscious effort of middle-class authors to re-cast a growing sector of work, disparaged by elites as vulgar profit-seeking, as a dignified occupation.

As learning via “growing up” in a counting room was becoming less possible, alternative modes of training in business emerged. Unlike the trades, labor unions in this sector were almost non-existent. Rather than a contested arena of conflict between employees and their employees over control of the training process, public and private educational institutions competed with each other in the provision of training for white-collar work. Already by the late 1880s, the majority of men who only pursued one to two years of public high school without graduating went on to become clerks.²⁰³ In the late nineteenth century, new educational entrepreneurs founded private “business” and “commercial” schools advertising specialized courses in penmanship, bookkeeping, commercial

²⁰¹ Clark, *Our Business Boys*, 30.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 23, 28.

²⁰³ From the biographies of those students in the English High School class of 1888 who only completed one or two years, the majority became clerks. George A. Moore, *Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Class of 1888 English High School: The First High School in America* (Boston: George A. Moore, 1941).

arithmetic, commercial law, banking, and contracting, for fees between \$30-\$160. As private options rose, public high schools reshaped their curriculum to match. In this way, while the politics of trade training hindered efforts to expand industrial training, the politics of white-collar work fueled the dramatic expansion of commercial education and a subsequent “race to the top” of additional educational credentials.

The World of the Economic Elite

This top stratum of Boston’s population, about 9% of the working male population, included merchants, wholesale traders and dealers, bankers, brokers, large-scale manufacturers, and professionals like lawyers and doctors.²⁰⁴ These men were overwhelmingly of New England heritage. They had their offices and stores downtown, where they could meet clients and customers, and a staff of clerks and bookkeepers negotiated contracts and helped manage their orders. Men might belong to one or more clubs or business associations that served as popular gathering places to eat meals, socialize, and host events. The majority of the wives, sisters, and daughters of these men would help manage the household, entertain guests, and raise children, or help run charity and benevolent societies.²⁰⁵ There were only a few occupations in this top stratum open to women—primarily teaching—and women professionals made up 5% of the female workforce. In these fields, like other employment sectors, women were often paid half, or less, of what their male counterparts

²⁰⁴ An estimate based on the IPUMS OCC1950 scheme, occupations as written into the census, and the family circumstances of a sampling of workers designated as “proprietors,” in addition to professionals. *IPUMS*, 1880. On the formation of this class, see Betty Farrell, *Elite Families: Class and Power in Nineteenth-Century Boston* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993); Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy: Harvard & the Boston Upper Class, 1800-1870* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1980).

²⁰⁵ Robert Archey Woods and Albert Joseph Kennedy, *Handbook of Settlements* (Boston: Charities Publication Committee, 1911), 105–38; Deutsch, *Women and the City*, 136–53.

earned. While the majority of sons and daughters of businessmen attended school to the age of 16, the sons and daughters of professionals typically graduated from high school. They might enroll in Boston's oldest secondary institution, the Public Latin School, the recently founded Girls Latin School (1878), or a private academy or preparatory school. A typical curriculum of English, Latin, Greek, modern languages, natural sciences, elocution, penmanship, art, and music offered technical skills that some would use in their professional lives, as well as serving as signs of gentility. The social contacts acquired in school also strengthened the bonds of a local elite. Families lived in sections of the South End, in town houses in the exclusive Back Bay or Beacon Hill, or in large estates in the suburbs of Boston. These households had one or more servants, specializing as cooks, maids, seamstresses, or coachmen.²⁰⁶ The very top of this elite group—perhaps no more than 1%—were the “Boston Brahmins,” a group of wealthy families, the majority of whom traced their ancestry back to the Mayflower, who developed a distinct culture around exclusive clubs, schools, and societies that set the cultural norms for the Boston elite.

Merchants and Manufacturers

Merchants, traders, and dealers directed the shipping of goods in and out of Boston's port and from Boston into the surrounding region. In contrast to small-scale retailers, these businessmen typically engaged in larger-scale wholesale trade in groceries and produce, cotton, wool, lumber, and tobacco.²⁰⁷ Commission merchants and brokers would facilitate these wholesale transactions.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ *IPUMS*.

²⁰⁷ *Leading Manufacturers and Merchants of the City of Boston*, 255.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.

Successful businessmen typically came from business families. For example, B. S. Snow & Co. was a wholesale fish dealer located on Boston's T Wharf. In 1880, B. S. Snow had just taken over the business from his father, Franklin Snow, who had established the business in 1853. They handled varieties of dry, salt, pickled, and boneless fish, and maintained both a three-story brick building for storage and a store on Long Wharf. They sold to wholesale as well as retail dealers across the U.S., especially large grocers in Boston, and employed 20 people to handle this business.²⁰⁹

While the bulk of business activity in Boston was in commerce, Boston was home, as we have seen, to a diversified set of local industries: boots and shoes, leather, clothing, confectionery, furniture, machinery, books and publishing, among others. Industrialists and manufacturers managed the production of goods in factories in Boston and its environs.²¹⁰ In many cases, the world of manufacturers blended into that of the master craftsman. The founder of Walworth Manufacturing Company and inventor of the modern system of steam heating, James Jones Walworth grew up in Canaan, Maine. He came to Boston at the age of 20 to enter the hardware business as an apprentice engineer, then by 1841 had entered into a partnership with Joseph Nason to start his business of heating buildings through steam and hot water.

Machinists and engineers, as described earlier, were well positioned to take advantage of lucrative opportunities in machine manufacture and production. Some very successful engineers belonged to this elite stratum of Boston society. Civil engineers specialized in the planning of public works projects, and were the most prestigious in the engineering hierarchy. In 1879 Boston's city engineer was paid \$4,500 annually, one of the highest paid municipal positions.²¹¹ Large companies

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 145.

²¹⁰ A. W. B., *The Clubs of Boston: Containing a Complete List of Members and Addresses of All Boston Clubs of Social and Business Prominence* (Boston: N. Wilson & Co., 1891), 9–10; Bacon, *The Book of Boston*, 72–74.

²¹¹ "Revised Salary Bill," *Documents of the City of Boston for the Year 1879, No. 55* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, City Printers, 1880), 15.

might hire a few engineers as consultants, foremen and superintendents, where working knowledge of the production process was important.

However, the positions of presidents and managers of the companies were more commonly occupied by those with a background in business. In contrast to the production side, those occupations that were both expanding and on average more lucrative were staff and management positions.²¹² The Boston city treasurer and auditor of accounts each earned \$5,000 annually in 1879, more than engineers and as much as the mayor.²¹³ The social network of businessmen cut laterally across sectors of the business community, and unlike craftsmen trained in a specific industry and part of occupation-specific trade unions, businessmen travelled easily across sectors.²¹⁴ While by no means a guarantee of success, the most lucrative positions for a young person to seek out in the 1880s were in the burgeoning field of business.

Teachers and Professionals

The largest single group of both men and women professionals was schoolteachers.²¹⁵ Teaching was a quickly growing and socially diverse sector in 1880s Boston, strongly divided by gender. Male teachers inhabited the same middle class stratum as craftsmen, small proprietors, and clerks,

²¹² Francis Faulkner Emery demonstrates this shift in management from craftsman to businessman. Francis' father was born in Newport and had come to Boston, where he first apprenticed and then became a successful builder and contractor. His son Francis, born in 1830, did not serve an apprenticeship but rather attended Philip Exeter Academy and Boston English High School, and after graduating became a clerk for the leather house of James P. Thorndike in Boston. In the 1850s he became a partner to a boot and shoe manufacturer with a factory in Athol and store in Boston. By 1880, he was living very comfortably in the South End with his wife, two daughters, and two servants, and retired in 1891. Herndon, *Men of Progress*, 751.

²¹³ "Revised Salary Bill," 15.

²¹⁴ Herndon, *Men of Progress*, 490.

²¹⁵ Classified as "teachers and scientific persons," but the majority were written into the census as "school teacher."

predominantly from New England.²¹⁶ They graduated from high school and often attended a year or two of a normal school or college. High School “Masters” in Boston, still predominantly men in 1880, were required to have college degrees.²¹⁷ In the Boston public schools in 1880, they earned between \$1,440 annually as a starting junior master and \$3,780 as a high school head master.²¹⁸

By the mid-nineteenth century, most Boston teachers were women.²¹⁹ These women tended to have wealthier backgrounds than their male counterparts; they were often from upper-class households that had fallen on hard times. The majority grew up in Boston with parents from Massachusetts.²²⁰ Most attended the Girls High School and then continued on into the two-year Boston Normal School.²²¹ Originally, when the Normal School was founded in 1852 to train women “assistants” to male schoolmasters, it was the only form of education beyond grammar school available to women.²²² Only as the high school system grew with the successful push for a Girls Latin School in 1878 was the Normal course extended beyond the high school level.²²³ Based on information gathered by tracking 33 out of the 40 students entering the Normal School in 1880 back through the manuscript census, 85% were born in Boston; only 18% had an Irish parent (compared

²¹⁶ Alfred P. Gage was a 44-year-old teacher from New Hampshire, living with his wife, 8 children ages five to 18 who all attended school, and one Irish domestic servant, in Charlestown. Year: 1880; Census Place: Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts; Roll: 553; Family History Film: 1254553; Page: 52D; Enumeration District: 604; Image: 0192

²¹⁷ College degrees were required of instructors of the Public Latin and English High School since at least the 1850s. *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1858* (Boston: Geo. C. Rand & Avery, City Printers, 1859), 151, 156. For more on the professional requirements of school teachers, see Arthur G. Powell, *The Uncertain Profession: Harvard and the Search for Educational Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Jurgen Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

²¹⁸ *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1880* (Boston: Rockwell & Churchill, City Printers, 1880), 24.

²¹⁹ IPUMS.

²²⁰ Based on tracing a random sample of female teachers to the manuscript census of 1860, 1870 and 1880.

²²¹ *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1888* (Boston: Rockwell & Churchill, City Printers, 1889), 240.

²²² Politically, women won secondary education in Boston with the argument that Boston needed more teachers. Polly Kaufmen details these gender politics in Polly Welts Kaufman, *Boston Women and City School Politics, 1872-1905* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1994).

²²³ *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1879* (Boston: Rockwell & Churchill, City Printers, 1879), 28; *Ibid.*, 75.

to 42% of the population); 21% came from elite families with a servant (compared to 9% of households); and only 6% of students had fathers who were laborers or operatives (compared to 50% of the male workforce).²²⁴ Compared to their male counterparts, women teachers were paid significantly less. In the Boston public schools in 1880, women assistants earned between \$504 annually as a starting assistant and \$1,800 as an assistant principal. The position of principals of schools were reserved for men.²²⁵

Women schoolteachers were single, as Boston school board policy mandated they give up their jobs once married.²²⁶ A particularly high rate of teachers lived with widowed mothers.²²⁷ Beacon Hill developed a reputation for housing many elite, single women, and teachers were part of this women's network.²²⁸ Zoa Balch's was a 25-year-old teacher born in MA, who lived with her widowed mother, aunt, sisters, and several servants, running a boarding house of 21 boarders on Beacon Street. She and her 32-year-old sister, Etta, also a teacher, were the only members of the family with occupations listed. Five servants were also employed to help run the boarding house.²²⁹ Many teachers went to work to help support their family, but in an occupation that was respectable and high status relative to factory or domestic work.

²²⁴ The sample probably represents the less privileged teachers, as some women went to a college-preparatory private academy or the Girls Latin High School and then a women's college before becoming a teacher. Boston Normal School Records, 1872-1942; Admissions, 1872-1906. Series 1, Vol. 1. Healey Library and Archives, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA.

²²⁵ The superintendent notes proudly that these salaries are "higher than elsewhere in New England." *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1880* (Boston: Rockwell & Churchill, City Printers, 1880), 24.

²²⁶ Although recent scholarship has found that in many cases these policies were not enforced and many teachers continued while married. Geraldine J. Clifford, *Those Good Gertrudes: A Social History of Women Teachers in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

²²⁷ 37% of female teachers live with widowed heads of household, compared to general statistic of 23% of working women and 28% of working men (calculated of those who were not heads of household themselves). *IPUMS*, 1880.

²²⁸ Firey, *Land Use in Central Boston*.

²²⁹ Year: 1880; Census Place: Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts; Roll: 555; Family History Film: 1254555; Page:311C; Enumeration District: 642; Image: 0003

Physicians, lawyers, and clergymen were the most elite professions, almost exclusively men, and made up about 4% of the male workforce.²³⁰ Most aspiring doctors would complete high school and then seek out an established physician under whom to train, or attend college or a medical school.²³¹ Aspiring lawyers attended high school, and afterwards they might attend a college or law school, or prepare for the bar exam under private tutelage.²³² While Boston's three health commissioners and superintendent of health earned \$3,000 annually in 1879, the city solicitor earned a salary on a par with the other highest paid public-sector positions, at \$5,000 per year.²³³ Clergymen attended college and trained at a divinity school or seminary. While doctors and lawyers were almost exclusively New Englanders, clergymen were a much more diverse group. Protestant ministers came from different regions of the U.S., Western Europe, and Scandinavia; Catholic priests also came in larger numbers from Ireland and Italy.²³⁴

²³⁰ My analysis of professionalization, to be taken up more fully in Chapter 5, draws on the work of Andrew Delano Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, Inc., 1976); Harold L. Wilensky, "The Professionalization of Everyone?," *American Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 2 (September 1, 1964): 137–58.

²³¹ Elbert Archer Jones attended high school in Maine, then a short business course, and started working as a bookkeeper in Brooklyn at the age of 17. A few years later he decided to enter the Homeopathic Medical College in New York, and earned an MD in 1892. Herndon, *Men of Progress*, 776. For analysis of the professionalization of the medical profession, see William G. Rothstein, *American Medical Schools and the Practice of Medicine: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Thomas Neville Bonner, *Iconoclast: Abraham Flexner and a Life in Learning* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

While in 1880 there were only a handful of female physicians, nurses were only slightly less numerous than female teachers. In 1880, nursing was classified as a "service" occupation. One justification for this classification might be that nursing had not yet professionalized, but in 1880, Boston was home to three training schools for nurses, attached to hospitals. The placement of nursing into the "service" category likely reflects the demographic norms around status rather than the inherent qualities of the occupation. See also: Rothstein, *American Medical Schools and the Practice of Medicine*; Amitai Etzioni, *The Semi-Professions and Their Organization: Teachers, Nurses, Social Workers* (New York: Free Press, 1969).

²³² Elijah George attended high school in New York City, moved to Boston to continue studying in the law office of Uriel H. and George G. Crocker, enrolled directly in Boston University Law School without a college degree, and was admitted to the Suffolk county bar in 1874. Herndon, *Men of Progress*, 50. See also: William R. Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers: A Study in the Clash of Professional Cultures* (New York: New York University Press, 1978).

²³³ "Revised Salary Bill," 15.

²³⁴ For example, Charles Reese was a 28-year-old clergyman from Illinois, who lived with his wife, younger son Charles, and 21-year-old black servant from South Carolina, in Roxbury. Their neighbors were retired lawyers, teachers,

Entering the Elite

Like those in the middle class, most members of the elite learned on the job, in an informal apprenticeship, working alongside a merchant, manufacturer or professional. Business leaders tended to receive far less education than professionals. From a sample of business leaders in Boston born between 1850-1865, about half received only a common school education. One continued on in a normal school, three to high school, one to French's Business College, and one to a drafting school. Only one entered Harvard – Frederick Prince, the son of a mayor of Boston—but he dropped out to pursue business opportunities, and became a successful banker and broker. None completed college.²³⁵ Like artisans, however, merchants and manufacturers were concerned that business apprenticeships were not providing appropriate training, as firms grew larger and their white-collar staff increased. They too began to pursue alternatives. While merchants and manufacturers still tried to place their sons in the most prominent establishments, formal education increasingly offered advantages as well.

Initially, just as the artisans complained that a high school education would bias their youth to mercantile and business trades, businessmen complained that a literary college education might bias youth against business. “What shall we say then of the colleges—and their number is legion—which, after four years of so-called training for life, turn out of their doors a helpless creature whose whole stock in trade consists in his ability to scan you a Greek verse, or to give you on demand a Latin

commercial travelers, and many families with servants. Year: 1880; Census Place: *Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: 560; Family History Film: 1254560; Page:121C; Enumeration District: 746; Image: 0023

The priests living at Boston College were from Ireland, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland .Year: 1880; Census Place: *Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: 560; Family History Film: 1254560; Page:121C; Enumeration District: 746; Image: 0023; Year: 1880; Census Place: *Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: 559; Family History Film: 1254559; Page:276A; Enumeration District: 726; Image: 0053

²³⁵ Herndon, *Men of Progress*.

quotation ‘to point a moral or adorn a tale?’²³⁶ On the one hand, businessmen tended to respect a collegiate education. As one shoe retailer clarifies, “I would not be understood to disparage literary education; far from it. I desire all my children to take a course in college.” On the other hand, the retailer continued, “I hope to teach them that a knowledge of men and things is fully as important as all they gain from text books.”²³⁷ College education was both valued and a sign of elite status, but businessmen resisted the privileging of what they believed to be a mostly irrelevant classical education.

Like middle-class artisans and proprietors, wealthy businessmen valued a *practical* education, and sought to control its content. They praised reforms in secondary and higher education that were shifting these institutions toward more useful subjects: “The case, bad as it is however, is by no means so dismal as it was some years ago, when all our colleges and higher schools compelled their pupils to follow the same, old, inflexible scholastic curriculum.” Instead, they valued curricular additions including “the principles underlying the practice of the useful arts,” “the world of living workers, in agriculture, trade, commerce and manufactures,” and “the marvelous progress of the physical sciences.”²³⁸ Private and public institutions in Boston would alter their curriculum and launch new programs to recruit and capitalize on this demographic.

Among professionals, as we have seen, formal education was more common. The oldest public institution, Boston Public Latin School, had been founded as a place to prepare sons for Harvard, and since the 1850s these institutions had been places where the Boston professional elite sent their sons.²³⁹ The public educational system had expanded significantly by 1880, but the Latin

²³⁶ *Manufacturer & Builder*, Vol 12, No. 2 (February, 1880): 26-27.

²³⁷ *How to Manage a Retail Shoe Store*, 53.

²³⁸ *Manufacturer & Builder*, Vol 12, No. 2 (February, 1880): 26.

²³⁹ Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy*.

schools for both men and women still remained exclusive institutions.²⁴⁰ Many sons also attended private preparatory academies, such as Chauncy Hall School that enrolled 182 boys, nine years and older, for \$140-200 in annual tuition. While the school's curriculum consisted of Latin, Greek, English, modern languages, history, botany, chemistry, physics, mathematics, elocution, penmanship, bookkeeping, vocal music, drawing, and military drill, a description of the weekly schedule revealed a primary focus on writing, reading, and public speaking: "written spelling lessons every day; writing in copy books; declamation every third week."²⁴¹

Fewer daughters of the elite attended college, but many received a secondary education in the new Girls' Latin School, or one of many small private denominational and non-sectarian academies.²⁴² Mrs. Hayes Home and Day School, for example, was a Congregationalist academy that enrolled 40 women who paid \$100-\$200 in annual tuition. Several Catholic academies for girls also existed, such as the Academy of Notre Dame, which enrolled 40 women in 1880. Some of these schools could be even smaller, effectively relying on a teacher who served as a private tutor to a group of young girls. Henry Williams conducted a private school for young ladies from 1851-1880, and taught many daughters of Boston Brahmins, including Julia Howe, the daughter of abolitionists Julia Ward Howe and Samuel Gridley Howe. His class sizes ranged from 11 to 19 students, between 13 and 20 years old. The register book for this school records that only one or two young women each year had previously attended public schools. The majority came from other private tutors, or, in

²⁴⁰ Other than the Latin schools, most high schools were not clearly "articulated" to colleges in 1880, but rather operated in parallel, serving different demographics of students. The articulation of secondary and higher education is the subject of Marc A. VanOverbeke, *The Standardization of American Schooling: Linking Secondary and Higher Education, 1870-1910* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

²⁴¹ *Chauncy Hall School Catalog, 1879-1880* (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1880), 13-21.

²⁴² Of the eight private secondary institutions for women in Boston listed in the Report of the Commissioner of Education in 1880, less than half of the students reported (93 out of 213) were enrolled in a "classical" college preparatory course, and only a handful were reported as preparing for college. The public Girls Latin School enrolled the greatest number of women preparing for college per year, at 136 students in 1880; however, only 5 graduates actually entered college from the previous year's class of 1879. John Eaton, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1880* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1882), 538, 614.

Julia Howe's case, home instruction from a "governess."²⁴³ In addition to the school subjects of boys' schools, the curriculum of girls' schools typically placed a heavier emphasis on modern languages, elocution, visual arts and music.²⁴⁴

If sons and daughters of the elite pursued higher education, there were several options in the Boston area in 1880. Most institutions of higher education in the Boston area had been founded as denominational colleges to train ministers and foster an educated laity, but by 1880, they had become nonsectarian and expanded their curricular offerings.²⁴⁵ Harvard was the largest institution in 1880, offering a classical collegiate education to 886 men, as well as a smaller scientific program through its attached Lawrence Scientific School. While Harvard only had two listed graduate students in 1880, it also served several hundred students enrolled in its law school, medical school, dental school, school of veterinary medicine, and divinity school. Harvard charged \$150 per year for all students except medical school students, who paid \$200. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, founded in 1865, enrolled 140 in regular courses and 14 graduate students, who were charged \$200 per year. Boston University, founded in 1873 as a co-ed research institution, charged \$100 per year and enrolled about 50 men and 34 women in its collegiate program, and over 200 professional students in its school of law and its theological seminary. The cheapest option, at \$60 per year, was Boston College, which opened in 1863 as a 7-year preparatory and collegiate program for Catholic boys, paralleling the Boston Public Latin to Harvard sequence. By 1880, it enrolled 66

²⁴³ Student Register for H. Williams' Private School (Mss C 5646). R Stanton Avery Special Collections Department, New England Historic Genealogical Society. Boston, MA.

²⁴⁴ *Catalogue and Circular of Gannett Institute for Young Ladies, 1879* (Boston: 1879), 4-7; Miss Caroline C. Johnson's School for Young Ladies, June 1876; Gutman Special Collections, Gutman Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Chauncy Hall began admitting girls to their school in 1867, and by 1880 their special department for women included extra training in elocution and physical culture (gymnastics and physical education). *Chauncy Hall School Catalog, 1879-1880*, 43-44.

²⁴⁵ Richard Freeland offers a compelling account of the institutional development of higher education in the Boston area, which he frames as a competitive struggle for status and survival. Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age*.

in its high school preparatory department and 186 male students in its collegiate program.²⁴⁶ Women might attend one of the new women's colleges, such as the Harvard Annex (later Radcliffe) that opened in 1879 to 27 students for \$150 per year, or Wellesley College (1875) that enrolled 372 students paying \$60 per year.

These schools primarily catered to the upper-middle and upper classes. Not only did an extended education mean students had to forgo work, but tuition at private institutions was also prohibitively expensive. For a middle-class income range of less than \$1000 per year, even the less expensive options of \$60 per year were often unaffordable.²⁴⁷ These schools were socially prominent institutions for developing social contacts and relationships among the elite. The commencement ceremonies of these colleges and universities were extensively covered in the *Boston Herald* and other Boston newspapers, and were the occasion of many parties and festivities for the Boston Brahmins in particular.²⁴⁸ For middle- and upper-class Catholics, Catholic colleges and universities operated in a similar fashion, serving as important symbols of academic achievement on a par with their Protestant counterparts.²⁴⁹

However, none of these institutions had a monopoly on entrance into the upper stratum of the Boston elite. Professionals could train in the offices of established practitioners and practice

²⁴⁶ Loftus, *Boston College High School, 1863-1983*; Charles Francis Donovan, *History of Boston College: From the Beginnings to 1990* (Chestnut Hill: The University Press of Boston College, 1990), 59.

²⁴⁷The 1869 Boston College catalog indicated that exceptions were granted to "indigent, but meritorious candidates." However, in 1880, only 25 scholarships were granted out of a student body of 186. Eaton, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1880*, 656. Harvard also granted a smaller number of fellowships; in 1915 they offered 299 to college students, out of a class of 1000. Lawrence Sexton, L. A. Frothingham, and F. L. Higginson, "The Overseers Report on the Tuition Fee," *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* 17, no. 31 (May 12, 1915): 574.

²⁴⁸ Marian Lawrence Peabody, *To Be Young Was Very Heaven* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1967); Edward Everett Hale and Lucretia Peabody Hale, *The New Harry and Lucy: A Story of Boston in the Summer of 1891* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1892).

²⁴⁹ Veritas, "A Catholic View of Education," *The Pilot*, January 17, 1880, 6.

themselves without having acquired a professional degree.²⁵⁰ Many leading businessmen had not even completed high school. Educational institutions were only some of many other social and cultural institutions that facilitated the social reproduction of the elite. For men, these included social clubs, professional societies, and trade associations; for women, these included churches and charities.

For women in particular, elite status was linked to cultural institutions outside formal education. The diary of one such woman, Marian Lawrence Peabody, provides a window into this world. Marian came from a long lineage of wealthy Bostonians. Her father was William Lawrence, the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, and her grandfather was Amos Adams Lawrence, an abolitionist and textile industrialist. She was educated in a number of small private schools and by private tutors. “I boarded the little horse car...to Charles, where I got off and walked to Miss Folsom's School. There I received instruction from Professor Kittredge of Harvard, Professor Dewey of MIT, Frau Grote, a wonderful German teacher, and others.” But extended education was not the norm. “I knew one or two who [went to college], but none of my group of friends did.” Rather, activities that trained young women in the norms of high society were more valuable. Marian and her sister moved from Cambridge to her aunt and uncle’s home in Boston because: “Aunt Sue, I think, felt we needed a little polishing up, and more social contacts, which the big city could give.” Social activities like evening dance classes offered the opportunities to meet eligible bachelors. “Every girl of fifteen or sixteen went to [Papanti’s] Friday evening if she could ... and danced with freshmen from Harvard.” Most importantly, “coming out” into high society was

²⁵⁰ In fact, elite Bostonians, with the strongest familial or social ties to established professionals, were most likely able to “apprentice” informally, while an expanding sector of professional schools offered alternative credentials to those who did not have these connections. This topic will be taken up fully in Chapter 5. Additionally, most professional schools did not require a college degree to enter. At Harvard Medical School in 1880, out of a total of 241 students enrolled, only 115 had a college degree. And out of a total enrollment of 151 at BU Law School, only 57 had college degrees. The lines between college and professional institutions were blurry in 1880, and a standardized sequence would only be formalized in subsequent decades. Eaton, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1880*.

the real cultural institution for learning the norms of the elite. As Marian writes, at the age of 18, “everyone was excited about ‘coming out’ and most of them devoted the entire year to it...In our year, there happened to be so many debutantes and so many well-to-do ones that there was a dance, or sometimes two, practically every night from Dec. 5th to Feb 7th.”²⁵¹

But as with the middle classes, the process of training among the elite was also undergoing a transformation. As elites in business became more economically powerful and socially prominent, traditional classical institutions changed their curricula to match new demands, embedding new “vocational” subjects within a genteel academic curriculum. In 1880, Chauncy Hall, the oldest private school for boys in Boston, advertised itself to parents who “wish to give their children a...business education...not confined to Arithmetic and Bookkeeping but gives such broad and generous culture as is demanded for a high position in the mercantile community.”²⁵² Colleges like Harvard were similarly worried about losing their relevance and enrollment numbers among members of the burgeoning business class. This factor spurred modifications to their entrance requirements that increased the university’s relevance to scientific and mercantile pursuits. These pressures also fueled the expansion and upgrading of professional schools, which capitalized on new areas of scientific knowledge (most obviously in the case of medicine), and responded to increasing competition from other proprietary schools. These strategies helped traditional colleges and universities maintain their position of status in elite circles while responding to a changing economy and changing trajectories for Boston’s future upper class.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Peabody, *To Be Young Was Very Heaven*.

²⁵² *Fifty-Second Annual Catalogue of the Teachers and Pupils of Chauncy-Hall School, 1879-1880* (Boston: David Clapp & Son, Printers, 1880), 10.

²⁵³ Freeland, *Academia’s Golden Age*; VanOverbeke, *The Standardization of American Schooling*.

Conclusion

In 1880, the landscape of work in Boston was highly divided by age, gender, ethnicity, and race. Bostonians found work through their parents, relatives, and ethnic and social ties in the community. After the age of 14 or 15, the vast majority of young people left school to work, and learned on the job. Formal educational institutions, except for a small sector of wealthy Boston proprietors and professionals, were fairly marginal as institutions of job-preparation. Even for elites, formal education was not essential.

The effects of industrialization, technological change, and larger firms, however, undercut traditional ways of learning for a large middle-class of craftsmen and proprietors. Some sought to revive traditional forms of apprenticeship; others sought to reshape formal educational institutions to fit their needs. These middle class Bostonians became central proponents of school-based training opportunities. However, as we will see, the future expansion of education affected diverse social groups differently. For low-wage adult workers, education proved beneficial for their children, but it could hardly limit the power of employers over the most vulnerable members of the community. The politics of trade training hindered the development of a successful training regime for the certification of trade skills, and the economic position of artisans grew increasingly precarious. For the booming sector of white-collar work, on the other hand, school quickly became the primary basis of training, allowing many women and second-generation immigrants access into relatively clean and stable employment. As this sector expanded, however, it too was differentiated into a gendered and racialized business hierarchy. Professional and business elites would retain control of the most lucrative occupations through the creation of more exclusive professional degree programs. In the next decades, workplace-based training for work would largely be replaced by

training in schools, and these schools would increasingly structure a new credential-based occupational hierarchy.

Chapter 2

Low-Wage Work and the Limits of Education as Labor Policy

[Dad] was used to hard work but not to the cold, to working underground, pushing wheelbarrows up scaffolds, or digging ditches. Here they toiled ten to twelve hours a day...It was back breaking work—and they had to work fast, because if they slowed down, other men would replace them. Dad told us about when they were building Filene's, digging the two stories that are underground, some mornings they would find two or three men who had slipped while they were working and had died.

-Pietrina Maravigna, immigrant to the North End, Boston¹

Introduction

Pietrina Maravigna was born in Italy and immigrated to Boston's North End in 1913. Her father was one of thousands of low-wage workers in Boston in the early twentieth century. The majority of fathers, brothers, and sons of low-wage families worked as day laborers, filling in the Back Bay to convert a swamp into high-end town houses for the Boston elite, constructing railway lines, subway systems, roads, and new commercial and residential buildings across the metropolitan area. Peddlers and hucksters sold fruit and vegetables on carts in the commercial districts of Boston and door-to-door in the suburbs. Porters, janitors, waiters, bellboys, and bootblacks offered their services to middle- and upper-class Bostonians. Mothers, wives, and daughters performed household labor at

¹ Sari Roboff and Katie Kenneally, *The North End* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1975), 26.

home, or labored as domestic servants, cooks, laundresses, and maids in the homes of the wealthiest Boston residents.

Ellen Ahearn's family was able to move out of low-wage work. Ellen was born to Irish parents in Massachusetts in 1860. In 1880 she worked as a cook living with her family on Salutation Street in the North End. Her father was a teamster, her mother "Kept House," and both relied on the work of their children and extended family to support a household of eight: Ellen's 18-year-old sister was also a cook, her 14-year-old cousin was a domestic servant, and her 18-year-old cousin was a laborer. Ellen continued working as a cook until she married John Mahoney, an Irish-born teamster, in 1887. By 1900 her husband John was employed by the city of Boston as a street paver, and Ellen could afford to send both her daughter Mary and son Daniel to high school for four years, and to send her son John to school until at least the age of 20.² In 1920, Ellen's family had moved into a triple-decker home in Dorchester, a clear sign of upward mobility. Mary and Daniel lived with and supported Ellen financially until at least 1940. While Daniel worked as an elevator operator at a telephone company, Mary entered the white-collar workforce as a stenographer in a grocery store. Ellen's son John became a schoolteacher in a Boston grammar school, where he worked through the 1920s.³

Between 1880 and 1940, many Boston families followed similar trajectories. Stephan Thernstrom found that about half of the children of those he classifies as "low manual" workers in

² Year: 1880; Census Place: *Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: 554; Family History Film: 1254554; Page:429C; Enumeration District: 624; Image: 0143 ; Ancestry.com. *Massachusetts, Marriage Records, 1840-1915* [database on-line].

³ Year: 1900; Census Place: *Boston Ward 6, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: 677; Page: 9B; Enumeration District:1219; FHL microfilm: 1240677; Year: 1910; Census Place: *Boston Ward 6, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: T624_615; Page: 6B; Enumeration District: 1324; FHL microfilm: 1374628; Year: 1920; Census Place: *Boston Ward 18, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: T625_737; Page: 5B; Enumeration District: 452; Image: 832; Year: 1930; Census Place: *Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: 953; Page: 10B; Enumeration District: 0433; Image: 564.0; FHL microfilm: 2340688; Year: 1940; Census Place: *Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: T627_1674; Page: 19A; Enumeration District: 15-535.

Boston in this period became craftsmen or white-collar workers in the course of their lifetime.⁴ Moving out of poverty is a dominant theme in biographies and memoirs of this period, and is a testament to this experience for many second-generation Irish Catholic, Jewish, Italian, and Polish immigrants, as well as some African Americans.⁵ Technological change also eliminated many of the most routine forms of manual labor in the decades after 1880. Nation-wide, the proportion of “laborers” in the census declined from 30% in 1880 to 23% in 1920; in Boston, laborers dropped from 16% of the male workforce in 1880 to 10% in 1910.⁶ In industry, new machinery increased the need for machine operatives but reduced the need for many jobs that required brute strength.⁷ New household appliances and public infrastructure projects such as water systems and electrification also reduced the heaviest labor of many women in the home.⁸

Despite instances of inter-generational mobility and significant economic changes, those who performed manual labor, peddled goods on the street, and carried out a wide range of services for others still made up a strikingly large percentage of the male and female workforce, even in 1940. For women, these jobs fell from over 60% to 45% of the workforce; for men, they remained between 20%-26% of the workforce.⁹ In addition, many of the same informal, arbitrary, and often

⁴ Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1973), 93.

⁵ Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1912); Peter Randolph, *From Slave Cabin to the Pulpit: The Autobiography of Rev. Peter Randolph* (Boston, JHEarle, 1893).

⁶ The quantitative data that is the groundwork for this chapter is based on the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) U.S. Federal census samples: 100% sample for 1880, 5% for 1900, 100% for 1920, 100% for 1930, and 100% for 1940, analyzed with STATA, a statistical software program (IPUMS).

⁷ Joshua L. Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work, Searching for Workers: American Labor Markets During Industrialization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 87; Harry Jerome, *Mechanization in Industry*, No. 27 (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1934), 401.

⁸ Katherine Leonard Turner, *How the Other Half Ate: A History of Working Class Meals at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014, 2014); Jeremy Greenwood, Ananth Seshadri, and Mehmet Yorukoglu, “Engines of Liberation,” *Review of Economic Studies* 72, no. 1 (January 2005): 109–33.

⁹ IPUMS, 1880-1940. “Female workforce” refers only to paid occupations – women also bore the responsibility for the majority of unpaid household and care work in their homes.

exploitative channels of recruitment, hiring, and firing of low-wage workers persisted well into the 1930s, and indeed, into the present.¹⁰

Whereas pathways into most sectors of work changed radically during this period, patterns of low-wage work remained stubbornly similar. This chapter explores how and why employment in this sector remained so constant amidst large-scale institutional transformations. While a range of reform strategies were pursued—the regulation transnational labor recruitment networks, philanthropic and public employment agencies, new management practices, labor organizing, public sector employment, and public welfare services—the most widely adopted reform was the expansion of formal education. Many middle-class architects of industrial and public policy believed that low-wage workers’ lack of skill and training was the primary problem, and education could be used to elevate the status of work, improve working conditions, and reduce poverty. Initially, many educational services, such as training schools for domestic servants, were pioneered by private charities and philanthropies, and often reflected reformer’s ideas of what low-wage worker’s wanted more than the demands of low-wage workers themselves. Subsequently, many services were expanded by the most developed public infrastructure for social services at the time: the public school system. The public sector proved more adept at responding to the needs of immigrant and African American families. Public schools opened a wide range of English-language classes, citizenship instruction, industrial courses, day care, kindergarten, vacation schools, educational centers, evening schools, part-time “continuation” schools, and primary and secondary schools. Responding to enrollment demands, certain services like English instruction, kindergartens, and full-time day schools grew, while occupational training in part-time schools shrank. Many immigrants

¹⁰ Ian Urbina, “Tricked and Indebted on Land, Abused or Abandoned at Sea,” *The New York Times*, November 9th, 2015, accessed March 31, 2017; Annette D. Bernhardt, *The Gloves-off Economy: Workplace Standards at the Bottom of America’s Labor Market* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, 2008); Eileen Appelbaum, Annette D. Bernhardt, and Richard J. Murnane, *Low-Wage America: How Employers Are Reshaping Opportunity in the Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage, 2003).

sought out knowledge that would give them an advantage in the labor market, as well as services that would alleviate the work of childcare. The children of low-wage workers increasingly attended primary school and even several years of high school by the end of this period, and many could use this training to access better employment.

While many of these services helped families move out of poverty, they did little to challenge the structural features of the labor market that disadvantaged those at the bottom. These features included the informal networks that facilitated entry, and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, and race. In addition, educational solutions located the burden of reform onto the individuals, and helped reinforce a new form of social stratification based on educational credentials that often reinforced long-established patterns of inequality. Finally, the focus on educational services perpetuated the notion that the problem of low-wage work could be solved through training, rather than more direct forms of intervention into the labor market.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, I briefly survey the types of low-wage work performed in Boston over this time period and the changing gender, ethnic, religious, and racial distribution of low-wage workers. Second, I turn to the various reform efforts to reshape paths into low-wage work between 1880 and 1940. Private sector philanthropies pursued different interventions, but education became the most popular by 1900. Many of these services were subsequently pushed or transferred to the public school system. Public schools launched a range of services, and through enrollment pressure, low-wage workers helped shape curricular offerings. I argue that while reformers in both the private and public sector believed that specific occupational training was the most important for low-wage workers, these programs were largely failures, and the most successful services were English instruction, forms of day care, and general education for the sons and daughters of low-wage workers. Third, I explore the limitations of this educational approach to labor policy, especially for adult workers. I explore some of the alternative efforts led by

workers to build political power to reshape the labor markets, including labor organizing and the expansion of public employment, as well as the pitfalls of gender and racial divisions in these efforts. By 1940, the political economy had transformed dramatically, and yet informal and often exploitative channels in the world of laborers and service workers persisted.

Change and Stability for Low-Wage Workers in Boston

The working population of Boston more than doubled between 1880 and the Great Depression. As a sector of employment, manual labor and service jobs remained some of the largest sectors for both men and women workers between 1880 and 1940, depicted in Figures 2.1 and 2.2.¹¹ The type of work and demographic composition of these low-wage occupations shifted significantly. While male laborers declined from 17% to 14% of the workforce, the male service sector rose from 6% to 12%. Female domestic service fell sharply from 50% to less than 30% of the female workforce.

Low-wage workers remained concentrated in certain neighborhoods of the city, depicted in Figures 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5. The North End, closest to the port of Boston, was the perennial home of recent immigrants. The West End was home to many domestics and porters close to wealthy homes on Beacon Hill and the Back Bay. The South End was a boarding house community for many laborers and porters of Boston's nearby railroad lines. South Boston and East Boston also had high concentrations of laborers. The congested living quarters and tenements in these neighborhoods

¹¹ In this chapter, I focus on manual laborers and service workers as representative categories of low-wage work. While some factory operatives, classified into the "operative" category, were also low-wage workers, I focus more closely on the range of occupations in manufacturing and industry in the next chapter.

were the subject of many of the first social surveys, and the site of an increasing number of philanthropic homes and aid societies.¹²

The inhabitants of these neighborhoods, however, changed significantly during these decades. In 1880, first- and second-generation Irish Catholic men and women made up over 40% of the Boston workforce, overwhelmingly overrepresented as laborers and domestic servants, concentrated in the North End, West End, and South Boston.

¹² Robert Archey Woods, *Americans in Process: A Settlement Study* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1903); Robert Archey Woods, *The City Wilderness: A Settlement Study* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1898); Charles F. Gettemy, "Living Conditions of the Wage-Earning Population in Certain Cities of Massachusetts," in *Forty-First Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1910*, Public Document No. 15 (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1910), 228–57.

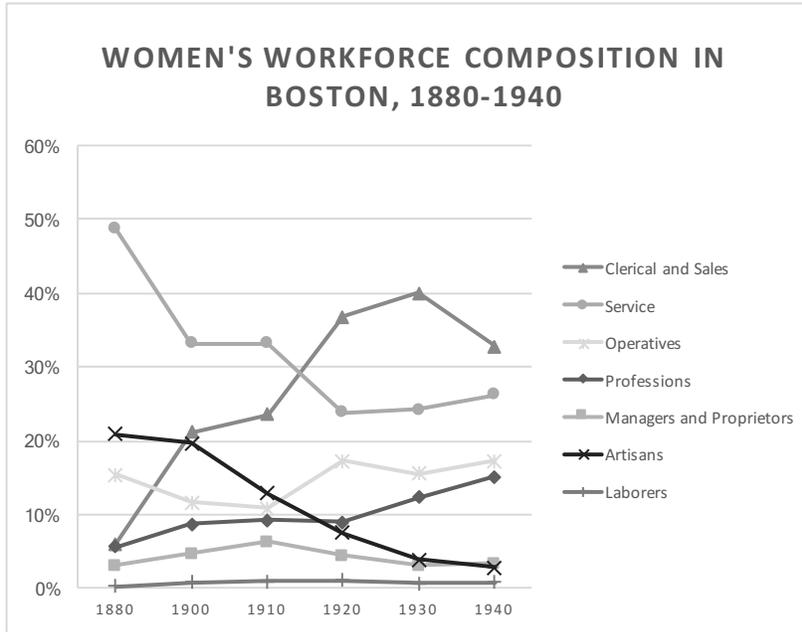


Figure 2.1

Sources: IPUMS 1880 100%, 1900 5%, 1910 1%, 1920 100%, 1930 100%, 1940 100%.

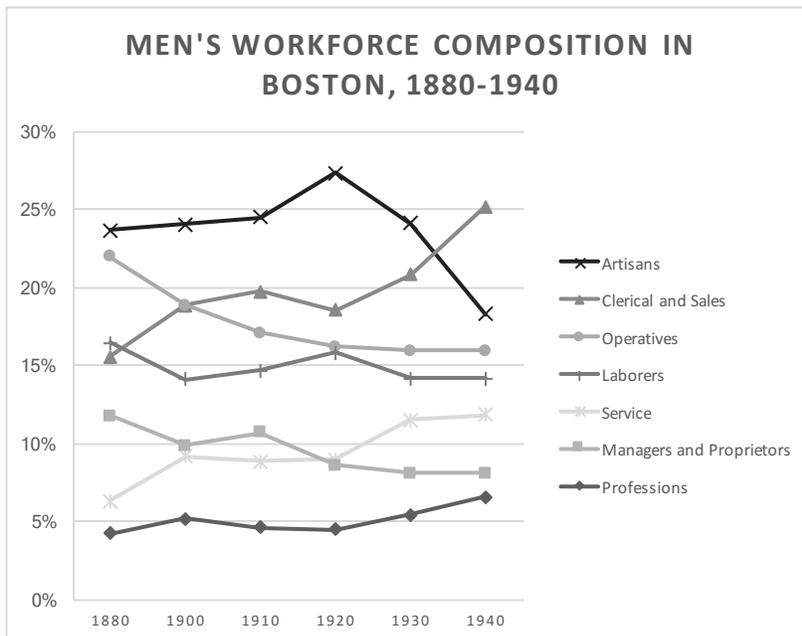
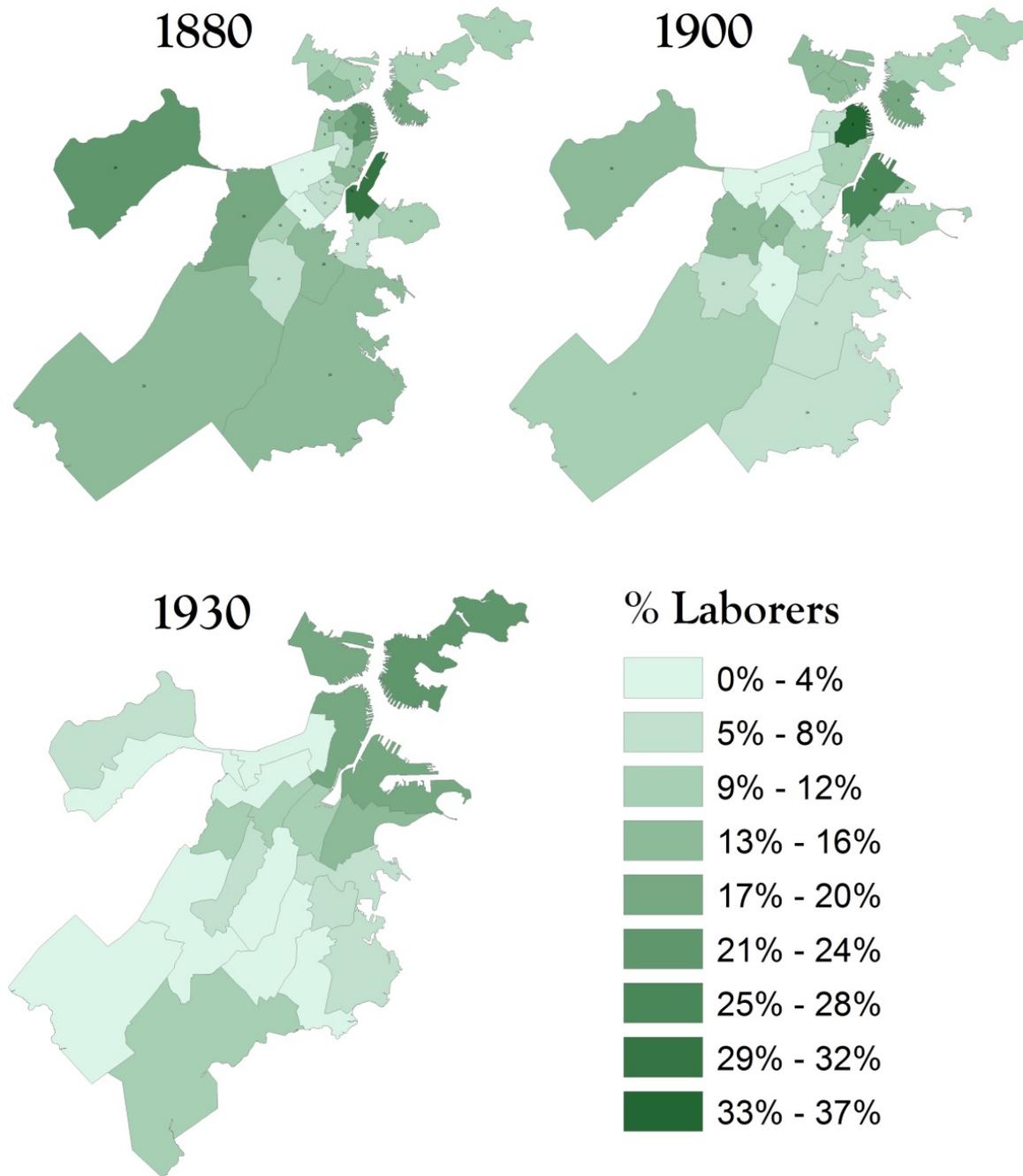


Figure 2.2

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.



Laborers in Boston

Figure 2.3

Sources: IPUMS 1880 10%, 1900 5%, and 1930 5%; Boston Ward Boundaries 1880, 1900, 1930, Robert W Fogel, Dora L Costa, Carlos Villarreal, Brian Bettenhausen, Eric Hanss, Christopher Roudiez, Noelle Yetter, and Andrea Zemp, Historical Urban Ecological data set (Chicago: Center for Population Economics, University of Chicago Booth School of Business, and The National Bureau of Economic Research, 2014).

Note: These maps depict the concentration of laborers' homes by ward in Boston between 1880 and 1930. I chose male laborers as a representative category to depict the homes of low-wage workers, as service workers often lived in the homes of their wealthy patrons.

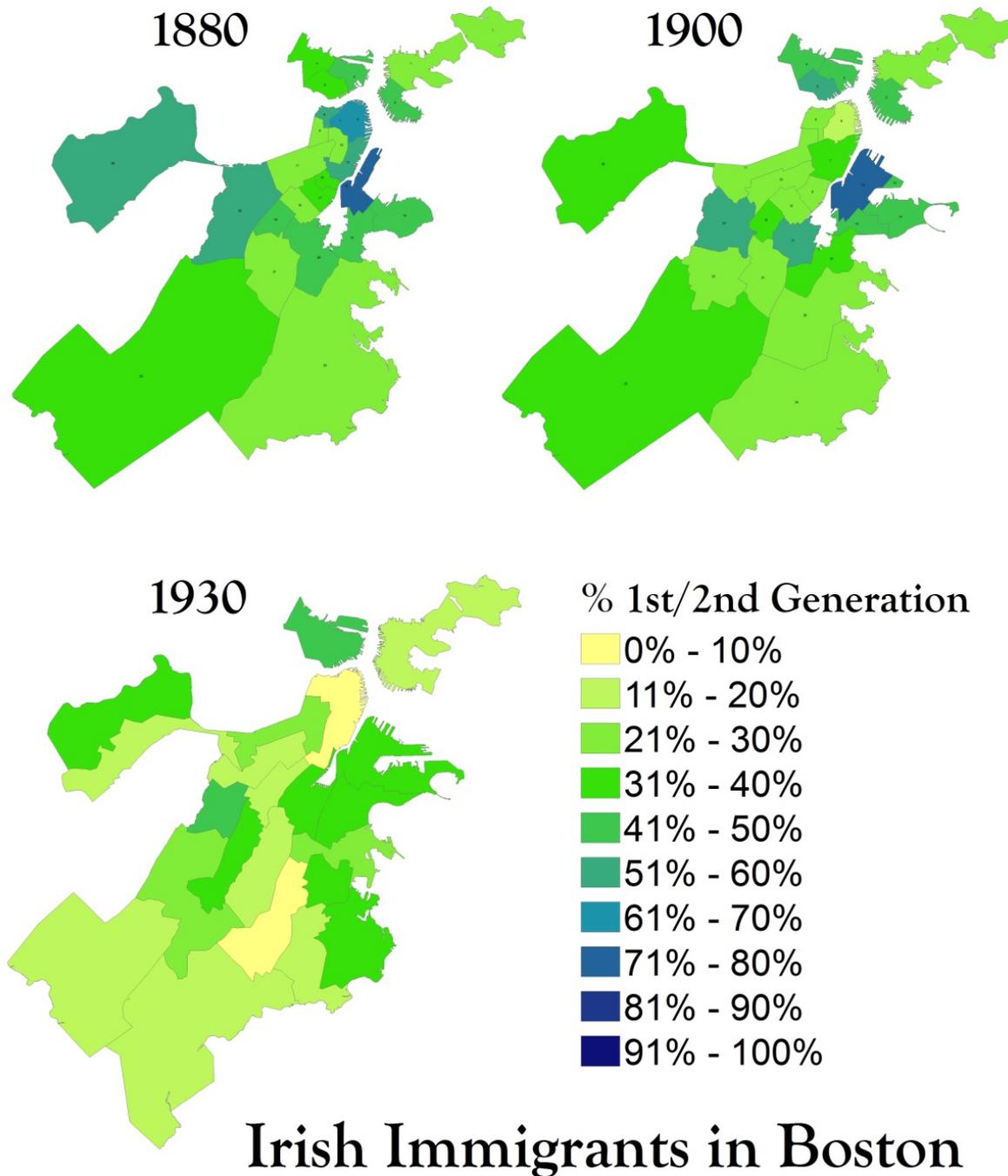
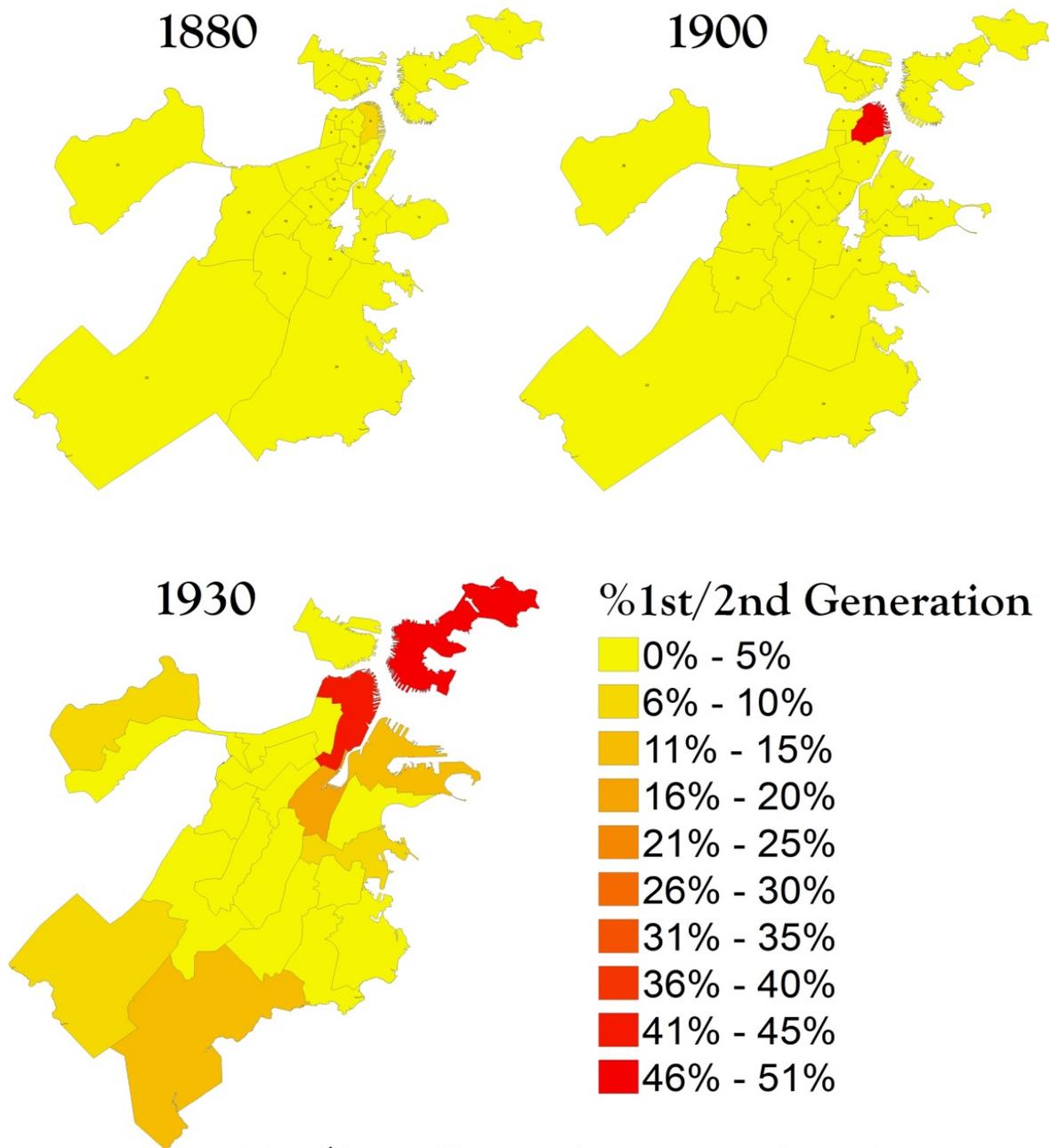


Figure 2.4

Sources: IPUMS 1880 10%, 1900 5%, and 1930 5%; Boston Ward Boundaries 1880, 1900, 1930, Historical Urban Ecological Data Set.

Note: These maps depict the concentration of first- and second-generation Irish immigrants by ward in Boston between 1880 and 1930.



Italian Immigrants in Boston

Figure 2.5

Sources: IPUMS 1880 10%, 1900 5%, and 1930 5%; Boston Ward Boundaries 1880, 1900, 1930, Historical Urban Ecological Data Set.

Note: These maps depict the concentration of first- and second-generation Italian immigrants by ward in Boston between 1880 and 1930.

Heritage and Race of Boston Population, age 13+, 1880-1940						
	1880	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
Heritage (White)						
Mass.	17.46	11.98	11.85	12.5	13.45	40.27
New Eng	16.45	11.49	10.07	7.5	6.24	6.13
US	2.13	2.78	3.01	3.31	3.33	3.67
Canadian	6.32	11	11.81	11.63	12.14	7.79
Eng/Scottish	6.45	7.66	7.01	6.01	5.09	2.6
Irish	41.92	35.98	30.24	27.62	24.47	11.03
Italian	0.52	3.18	4.64	8.25	10.15	9.47
German	4.29	5.12	4.56	3.01	2.6	0.91
Polish	0.22	0.93	0.22	1.71	2.51	1.76
Austrian	0.06	0.32	0.72	0.48	0.5	0.43
Lithuanian	0	0	0.02	0.81	1.57	1.37
Russian Jewish	0.15	3.53	7.51	9.35	9.8	7.82
Scandinavian	0.87	2.07	3.19	2.72	2.38	1.35
Western Eur.	1.04	1.17	1.25	1.11	0.93	0.37
Greek	0.01	0.06	0.4	0.53	0.66	0.76
Portuguese	0.31	0.31	0.7	0.4	0.38	0.24
Mid Eastern	0.01	0.1	0.2	0.46	0.83	0.84
Race						
Asian	0.1	0.29	0.46	0.22	0.28	0.2
African American	1.7	2.04	2.11	2.4	2.69	2.97

Figure 2.6

Sources: IPUMS 1880 100%, 1900 5%, 1910 1%, 1920 100%, 1930 100%, 1940 100%.

Over the next decades, low-wage Irish workers were replaced by increasing number of Italians, Poles, Lithuanians, and African Americans. Figure 2.6 shows the overall changing ethnic and racial composition of the Boston population age 13 and up. Figure 2.7 depicts the overrepresentation by heritage and race of male laborers specifically. Irish immigrants, initially overrepresented by 40% among laborers, drop to a slight underrepresentation by 1940. As Ellen Ahearn's story illustrates, many second-generation Irish entered better-paying jobs and moved out into the streetcar suburbs of Roxbury and Dorchester, and more recent immigrants took their place.

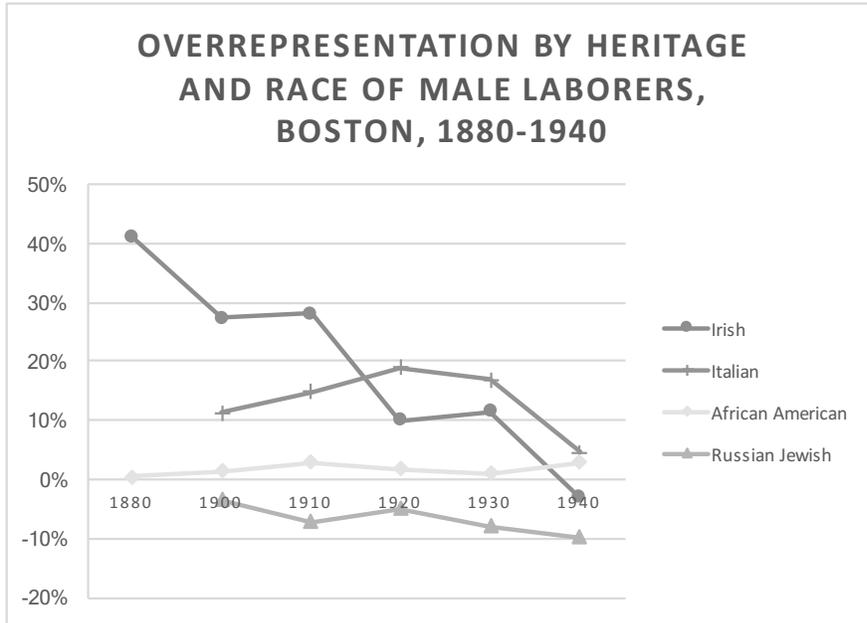


Figure 2.7

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

Note: “Overrepresentation” of a specific heritage group is calculated by subtracting the overall percentage of the Boston workforce that belongs to that group, from their percentage in the specific occupation. For example, if Irish men made up 40% of the Boston male workforce, but 80% of Boston male laborers, they would be “overrepresented” by 40%. Heritage is based on whether or not that individual had either a mother or father from a foreign country. In addition, because “heritage” can only be measured back one generation, based on the census listing for mother and father’s place of birth, this metric only captures 2nd generation immigrants, not 3rd or 4th generation immigrants. Therefore, the number of workers with ethnic heritage is likely much higher than this data suggests.

Italians grew from less than 1% of the Boston male workforce in 1900 to 16% in 1940. In 1900, Italians made up nearly half of the North End’s residents, and they were a significant proportion of the inhabitants of East Boston by the 1920s and 1930s. Men typically found work as laborers, women as factory operatives. Rose Giampoala’s parents moved from Italy to the North End in the late nineteenth century “without a dollar in their pockets” and without speaking any English. Her father found work as a day laborer, often working on sites far outside Boston. As she recalled, “They would have a truck meet at the corner of Prince and Salem or at North Square at 5 o’clock in the

morning, pick them up, drive them to Brockton like a herd of cattle. If they were working out quite a ways, like Springfield, they would come home only on weekends.”¹³

Russian immigrants, primarily Jewish, grew from less than 1% of the male workforce in 1880 to over 12% by 1940. Jewish immigrants, first concentrated in the North End and West End in the 1890s, subsequently moved out to Roxbury and Dorchester.¹⁴ Sam Gurvitz, born in the North End in 1904, remembered the division between the poorer Jewish population in the North End and the wealthier families that moved out: “One time when I was about 20, I invited a Jewish girl from Roxbury to come to a party in the North End. She accepted, but she called me later and said she couldn’t come because there weren’t any nice Jewish people living in the North End.”¹⁵ The Jewish population was underrepresented in laborer and service occupations throughout this period, as men and women primarily worked in the clothing trades and retail.

Smaller populations of Polish, Lithuanian, Greek, Middle Eastern, and Chinese workers also concentrated in low-wage work. Polish and Lithuanian immigrants, who typically worked as laborers or in the needle trades, lived in the North End and South Boston. Greeks and Middle Eastern immigrants were commonly peddlers or in service occupations in the North End, South End, and West End.¹⁶ As Nabeeha Hajjar, a Syrian immigrant to the South End, recalled: “The Syrian people, most of them when they first came to this country, used to peddle. They’d take stuff in a suitcase, little articles, and they’d take a streetcar and go out of Boston to the suburbs and sell from door to door...out to Brookline and Brighton [to] sell to the American people...they go to the house and

¹³ Roboff and Kenneally, *The North End*, 23–25.

¹⁴ *IPUMS*, 1880-1940.

¹⁵ Roboff and Kenneally, *The North End*, 11.

¹⁶ *IPUMS*, 1880-1940.

open the suitcase: linen, underwear, stockings, gloves, pencils, powder, anything.”¹⁷ A small population of Chinese immigrants first came to Boston in the late nineteenth century, settling in a part of the South End known as South Cove. They remained less than 1% of the workforce through 1940, concentrating in the service sector operating laundries and restaurants.¹⁸

African American men and women, who remained less than 4% of the workforce through 1940, were relegated to the least desirable service work. In the late nineteenth century they were concentrated in the West End and Beacon Hill, close to the wealthy households they served. At the turn of the century, many moved to the South End, close to the hotels of Copley Square and the Back Bay as well as the train lines, such as the New York-New Haven Rail Road, where they worked as porters and stewards.¹⁹ As the number of female domestics in Boston declined, black women increasingly replaced Irish women in the remaining positions. Figures 2.8 and 2.9 reflect the overrepresentation of African Americans in the service sector. African American men remained the most highly overrepresented group in service work throughout this period, while the proportion of African American women service workers increased as Irish representation fell, especially after the Great Depression.

¹⁷ Katie Kenneally, *The South End* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1975), 9.

¹⁸ Katie Kenneally, *Chinatown* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1976).

¹⁹ Kenneally, *The South End*, 20; Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty: Boston 1865-1900* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 77.

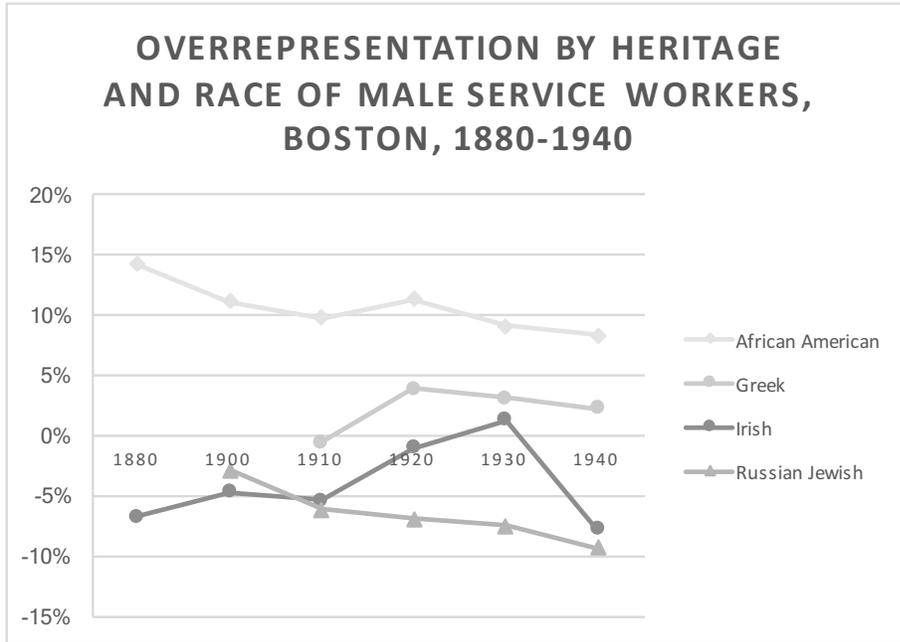


Figure 2.8

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

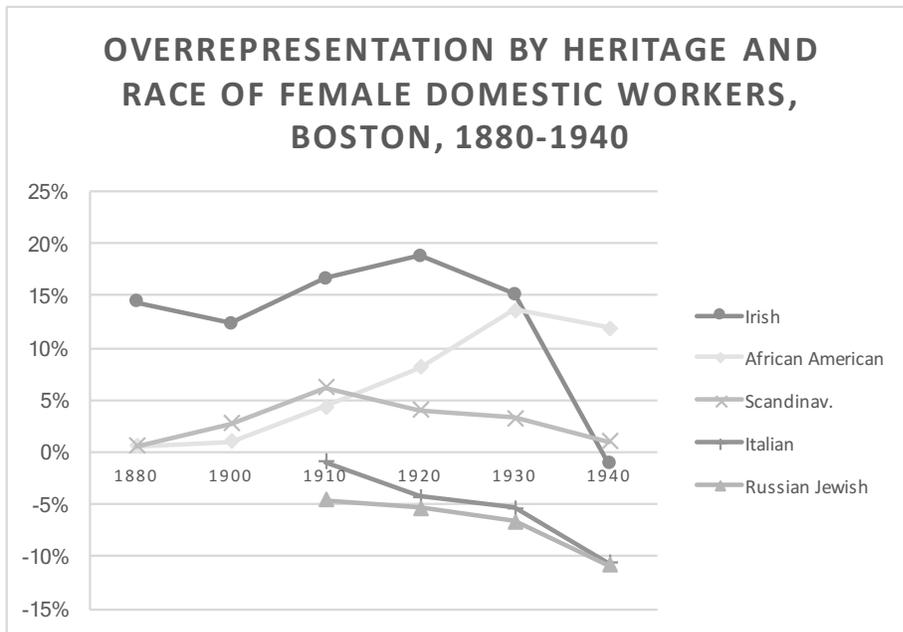


Figure 2.9

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

George Adams was one such African American born in the South End at the turn of the century. His father, a Jamaican immigrant, worked for the railroad at South Station. As he remembered: “a good number of blacks worked for the railroad, as did my father, mainly as porters or waiters on the trains.” His sisters worked for the laundries nearby. Marlene Stevens, another daughter of a Jamaican immigrant, described her mother’s hope of becoming a nurse, but how she “ended up as a domestic” because of the lack of occupational choice for blacks. “Sometimes I look back and think

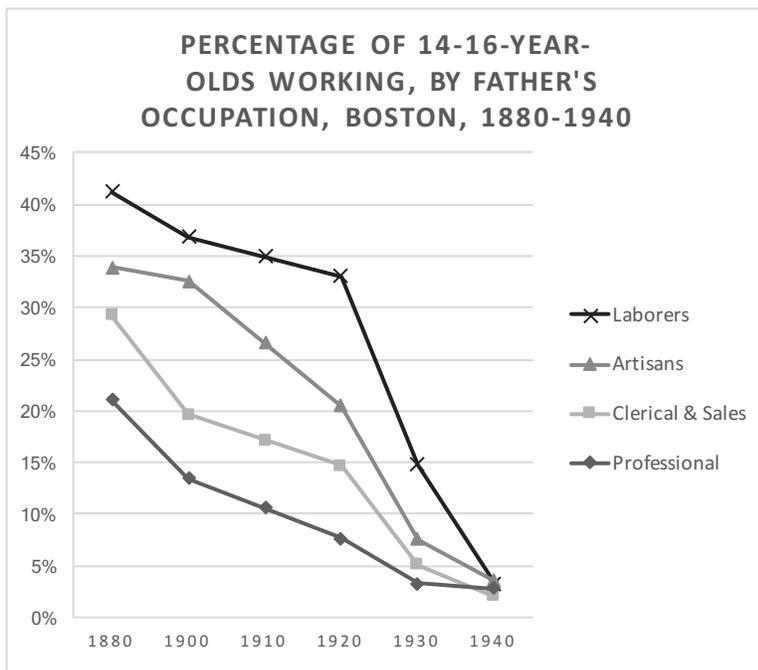


Figure 2.10

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

1910, the rates of work for the children of professionals fell to under 10%, while it would take nearly three more decades for the rates of work for laborer’s 14-16 year old children to fall to this level.

of how her young girl dreams were dashed,” Marlene said. “It makes me very angry.”²⁰

Another group of low-wage workers were children, paid small sums for almost all the work they performed. Child labor fell markedly during this period, depicted in Figure 2.10.²¹ In Boston in 1880, 41% of 14-16 year old sons of laborers went to work, compared to 21% of the sons of professionals. By

²⁰ Kenneally, *The South End*, 20.

²¹ These charts are based on the “school” and occupational variables of the IPUMS census samples: 1880 10%, 1900 5%, 1920 100%, 1930 100%, 1940 100%. I estimated the results for 1910 because the 1% sample available did not provide a large enough sample size.

A number of factors contributed to the decline in child labor. One was a fierce reform campaign led by philanthropists and labor activists, who sought to pass stricter child labor laws, implement new mechanisms of enforcement, and pressure employers through negative publicity. While Massachusetts had passed the first compulsory school law in 1852, enforcement continued to be a problem. The Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics made the problem of child labor a central focus of its reports throughout the late nineteenth century. Evidence suggests that employers did respond to these forms of legal and public pressure. A 1914 School Report commenting on the decline of child labor, based on a survey of employers, stated: “they feel that whatever future value might result to them from such employment is more than offset by legal restrictions, the frequent inspection of their places of business, the calls of investigators and hostile criticism. Their purpose seems to be to avoid ground for complaint on the part of those opposed to child labor.”²² But other important factors also made employers susceptible to that pressure. The influx of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe provided a ready supply of labor, and proved to be a steadier workforce than young teenagers. In factories, low-wage work performed by children was increasingly mechanized, and trained adult machine operatives took their place.²³ As employment options shrunk, the opportunity cost to attend school also declined, and many youth chose school instead.

Despite this decline, many young teenagers worked part-time, and many families depended on the income brought in by their children. An ethnic and racial hierarchy existed among these

²² Franklin B. Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools* (Boston: Boston Printing Department, 1914), 276.

²³ Gratton and Moen provide a helpful overview of the historiographical debate around the decline of child labor, and argue that while legislative reform and cultural norms played an important role, the case is “all but irrefutable that technological shifts favored adult workers.” Brian Gratton and Jon Roger Moen, “Immigration, Culture, and Child Labor in the United States, 1880-1920,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34, no. 3 (2004): 355–391; see also: Hugh D. Hindman, *Child Labor: An American History* (Armonk, NY: MESHARPE, 2002); Paul Osterman, *Getting Started: The Youth Labor Market* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980); Joseph F. Kett, *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America, 1750-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

young workers. Italian boys were often bootblacks and errand boys. Albert Mostone, whose father worked in construction, recalled: “When I was 11 years old, I would go to work with my father as a water boy. Just filling up a bucket of water and feeding water to the men who were building roads or putting in sewers. Or, if they needed a shovel, a saw, hammer, nails, I’d bring it down. My first week’s pay...was two dollars.”²⁴ Young black men typically worked in service jobs as bellboys and waiters; the sons of Irish laborers were predominantly day laborers and errand boys. Young Jewish men made up the majority of newsboys, and the sons of middle-class families worked as office boys and clerks.²⁵

Young women servants, maids, laundresses, and cooks were predominantly Irish or African Americans. Ethnic prejudices and language barriers tended to keep other recent immigrants out of domestic service, and as a result, Italian girls tended to go into factory work as candy dippers, box makers, or packers. Camela Cerqua moved to the North End from Avellino, Italy, at the age of nine. At age 12, she began working in a candy factory in Cambridge. As she remembered: “We used to work just by hand and I was a fancy dipper. There were certain signs I put on candy – the ‘B,’ the ‘C,’ the ‘W,’ the ‘S,’...they represented the candy that was inside.”²⁶ Jewish women tended to find work in the needle trades as tailors and seamstresses. More financially secure second-generation Irish and white native-born women increasingly entered the lower ends of retail and clerical work as bundle and cash girls.

²⁴ Roboff and Kenneally, *The North End*, 21.

²⁵ Edward N. Clopper, “Child Labor in the Street Trades,” in *Child Employing Industries: Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Conference of the National Child Labor Committee, Boston, Massachusetts* (New York, 1910), 139.

²⁶ Roboff and Kenneally, *The North End*, 19.

The Low-wage Labor Market

Since the nineteenth century, low-wage work had been acquired through informal kinship and social networks along ethnic and racial lines. Friends and relatives helped finance the costs of long-distance migration, and provided temporary housing and assistance upon arrival. Rose Giampoala recounted her father's experience in late nineteenth-century Boston: "My father was very good to people from his town. When they came from Italy they wouldn't have a place to go. If a man from my father's town came and was looking for a place to stay, he would come to my father's house. My father would give them a bed to sleep. He would ask his friends to find out if they had a place for a boarder."²⁷ African Americans who moved to Boston relied on a community of previous Southern migrants to establish themselves, and neighborhood taverns and barbershops became thronging social centers where information about lodging and employment was exchanged.²⁸

Specific ethnic groups tended to find particular niches within the occupational sector, based on a combination of employer prejudices, pre-migration backgrounds, and chain migration patterns. Intermediaries developed relationships with employers to secure a labor supply, typically drawing from particular immigrant networks or neighborhoods. While a federal contract labor law passed in 1885 banned direct employment contracts for immigrants, a vast field of indefinite promises of employment fell outside the law's reach. In the subsequent decades a vast labor recruitment industry grew. This industry primarily facilitated the movement of low-wage workers, as immigrant artisans tended to prefer guarantees of employment, and organized craft workers helped stem the importation of artisans from abroad. Several types of middlemen played an important role in this

²⁷ Ibid., 23.

²⁸ Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty: Boston 1865-1900*, 74–75.

transnational coordination of labor. The labor agent was typically an immigrant entrepreneur, fluent in English, who relied on immigrants for business and thus stood to gain from increased immigration. These labor agents cooperated with steamship agents to spread statements, letters, circulars, and newspapers abroad that alleged demand for labor in the United States. Steamship agents, who also profited from increased transportation, might employ “agitators” or “runners” to travel from village to village recruiting emigrants. They might also employ local money lenders to finance the transport immigrants on credit, and “travelling labor agents” to lead a group to the U.S, often furnishing fictitious addresses to avoid difficulties with the immigration service.²⁹

The “padrone” was another middleman. The 1911 multi-volume U.S. Immigration Commission Report, or Dillingham Report, extensively investigated the operation of the immigrant labor market, and singled out padrones as those engaged in the importation of immigrants for direct hire or for hire to other employers.³⁰ Based on contemporary usage, a “padrone” could be used to refer to a wide range of occupations: “labor recruiters, immigrant bankers, steamship and travel agents, contractors, saloon keepers, boardinghouse proprietors, interpreters, private postal agents, food importers, ethnic newspaper publishers, foremen (work gang bosses), commissary and bunkhouse agents.”³¹ When used by reformers, a “padrone” was more a racialized term of denigration than a specific occupational title, and was associated with the abuses that arose across this transnational low-wage immigrant industry. However, this term also described the real phenomenon of a powerful group of immigrant labor intermediaries, based on fundamentally modern labor management practices that paralleled the corresponding changes in large firms. The most powerful,

²⁹ William P. Dillingham, “Contract Labor and Induced and Assisted Immigration,” in *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Volume II* (Washington: GPO, 1911), 371–86.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 383.

³¹ Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18.

well-connected padrones coordinated the movement of immigrant workers into railroad construction, mining, and agricultural labor, especially in remote western regions of the United States where they could exert significant power over isolated workers. Increased competition in cities put a limit on these practices, but padrones still dominated some urban service sectors, such as Greek bootblacks and Syrian peddlers, including in Boston.³² Only after immigration dropped steeply in the wake of the 1924 Immigration Act did the power of padrones weaken.

Once an ethnic group had established itself in a particular sector, workers themselves served to strengthen the ties between their employment and their home community in a process of chain migration. Not only did local ties aid recent arrivals, employers also benefitted and encouraged these particular ethnic connections. Employing the relatives and friends of a current worker facilitated more rapid orientation to a new job, and instilled a sense of personal obligation to remain.³³ However, the strength of these ties and the ability of employees to assist others in finding work varied by job sector and ethnic or racial group. Evidence suggests African-Americans, who were relegated to the most menial laboring and service jobs, scattered across business or in personal homes, could less easily assist each other in finding employment.³⁴

For those without ready access to personal contacts, employment agencies grew increasingly common as a means of pairing employers and employees. The majority of these “intelligence offices” were for-profit enterprises that relied on fees from both employers and employees, and their success mainly depended upon social connections of their owners. Employment services were the primary means by which domestic service workers were recruited and placed. Lucy Salmon’s

³² William P. Dillingham, “The Greek Padrone System in the United States,” in *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Volume II* (Washington: GPO, 1911), 392.

³³ Suzanne Model, “Work and Family: Blacks and Immigrants from South and East Europe,” in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*, ed. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 133.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 139–41.

1897 study of domestic service, the first to systematically investigate domestic service as a sector of women's employment, finds that employment agencies, or intelligence offices, were increasingly replacing word of mouth and "girl wanted" signs in large cities.³⁵ Domestic service was growing less and less attractive to young women, especially as factory or white-collar jobs became alternative employment options. Those women who took up domestic service work were typically the most impoverished, or excluded from other jobs by the racism of employers, especially African Americans. Many wealthy households refused to hire black women as domestics in the nineteenth century, but as women willing to do such work grew more rare, employers were "forced...to be less particular." Whites typically did not hire blacks directly, and blacks would not have felt able to approach white employers directly, making intermediary employment bureaus all the more essential.³⁶ Some employment officers tried to take advantage of this vulnerability, and even use it as a sales tactic. One agent recommended African American women to her patrons because "the little outlet afforded them on account of their nationality makes them more faithful, more eager to keep a situation."³⁷ The vulnerable position of domestics was packaged and promoted to upper-class households seeking employees.

The world of employment agencies was a rapidly growing in the late nineteenth century. While the state of Massachusetts required intelligence offices to be licensed in 1848, they still operated in a fairly unregulated market, and deception of unsuspecting applicants was common. In 1894, Boston was home to over 119 licensed private intelligence offices and 14 licensed

³⁵ Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Domestic Service* (New York: Macmillan, 1897), 114.

³⁶ Walter Licht, *Getting Work: Philadelphia, 1840-1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 125.

³⁷ Venila S. Burrington, "Negro Domestic Workers in Boston," *Bulletin of the Inter-Municipal Committee on Household Research*, 1: 7, May 1905, 12-13.

philanthropic agencies.³⁸ These agencies became the object of increasing investigation by middle class reformers. The Dillingham Commission conducted an investigation of immigrant homes and aid societies, institutions that offered lodging and employment services to recent immigrants, but, like entrepreneurial employment agencies, also often took advantage of new arrivals. Sending undercover agents to pose as prospective employees and employers, the investigators uncovered a wide range of abuses. Not only did these homes and societies charge excess fees to unsuspecting immigrants, but female applicants were often taken advantage of. In one home located in the wharf district, established in 1895 for assisting immigrants “bodily and spiritually,” the following was reported:

On Monday morning about 8 o'clock the investigator was awakened by a knock on the door...she went to the door, opened it a few inches and asked what was wanted, and the representative pushed his way into the room. He said that he had secured a position for her and was going to send her to a 'lady-friend' of his who would take good care of her. He then made immoral proposals to her and tried to criminally assault her.³⁹

These investigations exposed abuses in the world of low-wage work that reformers sought to eliminate.

³⁸ Horace Greeley Wadlin, “Unemployment,” in *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1894* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1894), 107.

³⁹ Martha E. Dodson, “Immigrant Homes and Aid Societies,” in *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Volume 37* (Washington: GPO, 1911), 150.

Philanthropic and Voluntary Reform Efforts

While a wide range of small-scale charities and immigrant aid societies existed in late nineteenth century Boston, the turn of the century witnessed a large expansion of philanthropic social services, settlement houses, and labor reform associations. The poverty of immigrant neighborhoods was their primary focus. The leaders of these institutions were middle- and upper-class social reformers—especially college-educated women—who sought to counter the economic and moral dangers of unbridled industrial capitalism. For these progressive reformers, such as Pauline Agassiz Shaw, Mary Morton Kehew, and Robert Woods, the conditions of modern industry were a moral outrage not only because of growing divide between the have and the have-nots, but also because of the expansion of mind-deadening forms of labor that hindered spiritual growth. Poverty, and upper-class indifference to poverty, reflected a failure of understanding and connection between classes. With the right social institutions and interventions, industrial society could be remade cooperative commonwealth based on a social Christian ideal of fellowship. Fundamentally, this was a model of social reform based on education. Interventions took the form of social investigation and surveys, settlement houses that literally bridged class-divides, and most importantly, schools, to both acculturate new immigrants and train workers for better forms of employment. As we will see, however, efforts to provide occupational training to low-wage workers tended to be unsuccessful. Many of these philanthropies transferred some of their more expensive social services for low-wage workers onto the public school system, and shifted their focus away from lower-class constituencies and towards more attractive professional activities for their college-educated staff.

One of the most central philanthropies dedicated to assisting working women in Boston was the Women's Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU). The WEIU was founded in 1877 "for the

purpose of increasing fellowship among women, in order to secure the best practical methods for securing their education, industrial and social advancement.”⁴⁰ One of the first services they offered was a legal Protection Department, consisting of a staff of attorneys and predominantly female assistants who investigated complaints brought by working women and either settled them independently or prosecuted them in court. The majority of cases involved wage theft. To take one typical case among hundreds, one “man declined to pay the whole of a bill brought against him by a nurse who had taken care of his wife, declaring she had not earned \$10 a week, as she had not done the washing as well as the watching. We carried the case into court, and recovered one-half of the amount.”⁴¹

Many of the cases taken up by the Protective Department concerned the grievances of domestic workers. “Claims for such unpaid work constitute a large part of our business,” and caused some of the greatest “difficulties.”⁴² The “servant problem,” discussed widely in journals and newspapers of the time, was the dissatisfaction of matrons with their servants and the broader trend of women avoiding this type of work. The WEIU, although primarily composed of middle- and upper-class women who employed domestic servants in their own households, was one of the first organizations to investigate the “servant problem” as a labor problem.⁴³ As diagnosed by the WEIU, service work was conducted on a “do-as-I-please” principle instead of a clear, contractual basis. “Some housekeepers act as if for \$2.00 or \$3.00 a week they had a right to seven days’ unremitting

⁴⁰ *Report of the WEIU for 1882* (Boston: No. 157 Tremont Street, 1882), 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴² *Report of the WEIU for 1889* (Boston: Geo. E. Crosby & Co., Printers, 1889), 36.

⁴³ Even labor reformer and director of the MA Bureau of Labor Statistics, Carroll D. Wright, who undertook a detailed study of “Working Girls” in Boston in 1884, excluded domestic service entirely from his analysis. Despite his reputation as a champion of government intervention on behalf of poor labor conditions, Wright relied on moral entreaties, not policy prescriptions, to solve the problem of the over-worked servant, convinced that “all that is necessary to good relations...is a more enlightened understanding on both sides,” and “putting ourselves in others’ places.” Carroll D. Wright, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1884*, Public Document No. 15 (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1884), 1–134; *Ibid.*, 199.

labor.”⁴⁴ However, the class position of WEIU leaders complicated their relationship to this labor problem.⁴⁵ The WEIU was careful to place an equivalent amount of blame on the servant: “Some domestics behave as if they, in turn, should dictate what should be done and when. One is exacting, the other impertinent, and domestic peace and skilled intelligence are still the dream of the weary mistress and the careless maid.”⁴⁶ They urged employers to keep a record-book for wages, so that agreements could be confirmed and verified. But the best way to solve this problem, they believed, was to encourage “a better state of feeling between the mistress and maid.”⁴⁷

To this end, the WEIU began the Domestic Service Employment Bureau in 1885. A number of philanthropic employment agencies had emerged to counter the unregulated market of for-profit intelligence offices. The WEIU had opened one of the first philanthropic employment offices in 1882, and aimed “not only at finding employment for [women], but at giving them kindly advice as well.”⁴⁸ The Domestic Service department was added several years later to specifically connect employees and employers in this troubled sector. The middle-class leadership also hoped to recruit more white, native-born women away from industrial or commercial employment to more wholesome and natural work inside the home.

The WEIU was soon overwhelmed by the applications of seekers of servants, which far outnumbered applications of servants themselves. They were also inundated by many women who came to use their employment services “who have not been accustomed to general labor, or trained

⁴⁴ *Report of the WEIU for 1889*, 36.

⁴⁵ Lara Vapnek and Sarah Deutsch both deal with this dilemma in great detail. Lara Vapnek, *Breadwinners: Working Women and Economic Independence, 1865-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 102–129; Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 54–78.

⁴⁶ *Report of the WEIU for 1889*, 36.

⁴⁷ *Report of the WEIU for 1888*, 36.

⁴⁸ *Report of the WEIU for 1882*, 52.

to service of any particular kind.”⁴⁹ Indeed, this observation highlights that what was often deemed “unskilled” work was in fact highly skilled—knowledge of cooking, laundering, and cleaning as well as the cultural norms expected in service had to be learned. However, rather than interpret applicants’ lack of training as due to a structural feature of the female labor market, in which the women who sought these occupations did not necessarily do so out of choice but out of necessity, the philanthropists of the WEIU began to place much of the blame for this imbalance on the servant. “The competent general housework girl is practically a thing of the past...The demand for household servants is greater than the supply, thus giving little incentive to maids to become really skilled in their work.”⁵⁰

The WEIU closed the Domestic Service department of their bureau in 1889 and reopened it two years later with a different focus.⁵¹ Rather than help all job seekers, the new Domestic Service Bureau would pursue a more selective strategy of only aiding those who were “fitted for” domestic service.⁵² To make sure that they sent out “only reliable and satisfactory women” they asked employers to report back on their experiences with each servant.⁵³ Over the next several years they continued what they described as a “weeding-out process,” or removing the names of “unfit workers” from their books, which “will strengthen the character for reliability at which the Union aims.”⁵⁴ While this strategy may have elevated the reputation of their agency among employers, it did little to make domestic service a more attractive sector of work, or challenge the harsh conditions facing those servants they “weeded out.”

⁴⁹ *Report of the WEIU for 1890*, 33.

⁵⁰ *Report of the WEIU for 1895*, 40.

⁵¹ *Report of the WEIU for 1889*, 15; *Report of the WEIU for 1891*, 12.

⁵² *Report of the WEIU for 1890*, 33.

⁵³ *Report of the WEIU for 1891*, 12.

⁵⁴ *Report of the WEIU for 1894*, 33; *Report of the WEIU for 1895*, 39.

Under the leadership of Mary Kehew, president of the WEIU from 1892 to 1913, the WEIU continued to move away from direct services to low-wage workers, toward more professional, research-oriented, and educational activities. Kehew, born into a long line of Bostonian Unitarians and married to an oil merchant, became a leader in the social milieu of progressive settlement house workers in Boston. While she would go on to cautiously support organizing efforts among women, including bringing the first female AFL organizer, Mary Kenny, to Boston through their mutual acquaintance Jane Addams, Kehew ultimately placed her faith in education. In 1897, the Domestic Service Bureau was replaced with a Domestic Reform League. The stated mission of the Reform League was:

“The scientific and careful consideration of present condition; the awakening of the interest of women in the largest aspects of this problem; the recognition by the employer that fair conditions should be given for faithful service, and by the employee, that interested and efficient service must be given in exchange for fair wages and just conditions; and the further recognition by both the employer and employee that efficiency should be the standard of wages.”⁵⁵

The aim of this League was to improve the standards of employment offices by enforcing a higher set of standards and practices within their own. Applicants, both employers and employees, had to agree to this mission to become members of the League, and placements were then made among members. The service tilted toward favoring the employer than the employee. While both parties had to sign an employment contract, the contract stipulated that employees could only leave if they were not paid or were struck, while employers could terminate employment without notice for illness, disobedience, moral misconduct, or habitual negligence.⁵⁶ Additionally, the financial burden of this service was placed entirely on the employees. While employers could become members of the

⁵⁵ *Report of the WEIU for 1898*, 47.

⁵⁶ Vapnek, *Breadwinners*, 114–15.

league for free, domestic workers had to pay \$2 per year plus 10% of their first month's wages. This fee made the Domestic Reform League more than 2-4 times as expensive as other private employment agencies in the city.⁵⁷ As they wrote after the first year of operation, "it has already been useful in turning away some objectionable employers, still more in attracting earnest women...girls of a higher class appreciate the worth of the League and wish to join."⁵⁸ While the Domestic Reform League provided domestics with some legal recourse, it operated on a selective basis that did not address the unregulated and often exploitative conditions of domestic service work.

In conjunction with the reorganized placement serve, the WEIU also opened a new School of Housekeeping. Their School of Housekeeping offered an eight-month a course for young women between 16 and 30 years in kitchen, laundry, chamber, and parlor work, as well as special instruction in "house sanitation, personal hygiene, or economy of foods," based on the fundamental tenet that "Housework is a trade." Prospective students were required to garner endorsements from two adults as to their "character and general intelligence," and were required to live and work for the WEIU in exchange for tuition, room and board, as well as pay a steep fee if they left the school early. Because Kehew and the female leadership of the WEIU imagined the "servant problem" to be the result of the lack of skill of the worker, they believed that education and job training could attract a "higher class" of employees and raise the status of domestic work itself. Kehew argued that these new services would "dignify housework in the eyes of both employers and employees by lift it to the level of other trades."⁵⁹ Kehew's faith was representative of philanthropists who saw education as a means of improving working conditions for the most impoverished workers. In addition to the class for workers, the school also offered a course for employers, structured as more of an academic

⁵⁷ *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the WEIU for 1911*, 24.

⁵⁸ *Report of the WEIU for 1898*, 49.

⁵⁹ Vapnek, *Breadwinners*, 109.

lecture series, on sanitation, interior design, food chemistry, and best practices for managing domestic servants.⁶⁰ These courses were meant to appeal to “young college women...who wish to fit themselves to manage a household on the best economic and hygienic basis.”⁶¹ The School was put under the charge of Henrietta Goodrich, a Michigan native who had just completed a masters thesis on “Laboratory Methods in House Sanitation” at the University of Chicago.⁶²

The WEIU quickly ran into the limits of its own education model for solving the problems of low-wage work. They found almost no demand for their classes targeted at employees, and after only five students enrolled in 1900, they gave up these classes entirely.⁶³ In retrospect, given the low-status and desirability of household employment, the dearth of applicants for domestic service training is not surprising. The classes meant for employers on household management, on the other hand, increased during the same time period, attracting an increasing number of “young women just out of college.” Due to this interest, a professional course open to college graduates was started to train women in “leadership in the various branches of Home Economics,” and in 1902 this school was incorporated into the Department of Home Economics at Simmons College.⁶⁴ The women who attended became teachers, researchers, or housewives themselves, but they were far from the domestic servants that the WEIU originally aimed to reach.

In 1910, the Domestic Reform League employment office was closed for good. The yearly report attributed this decision to the unprofitability of the enterprise, the restrictions of Boston

⁶⁰ *Report of the WEIU for 1905*, 29; “School of Housekeeping: Course for Employees, 1899-1900”; “School of Housekeeping: Course for Employers, 1897,” Box 2, Folder 9, Women's Educational and Industrial Union Records, 1894-1955, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶¹ Vapnek, *Breadwinners*, 117.

⁶² *University Record*, Vol 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1899), 65; “A School of Housekeeping,” *The Boston Cooking School Magazine* 3:6 (April and May, 1899), 442.

⁶³ Vapnek, *Breadwinners*, 118.

⁶⁴ *Report of the WEIU for 1905*, 28-29.

intelligence office licensing laws (which required the services of a licensed intelligence office to be available to all, not a select few), and the shifting focus of the League. After closing their office to domestic workers, they converted their general employment agency into a new Appointment Bureau that catered primarily to college-educated women.⁶⁵ The original mission of the Domestic Service employment bureau was abandoned, replaced by research and educational activities that capitalized on the potential of domestic work as a scientific field, but did not come into contact with domestic workers.

One of the new areas to which the WEIU staff devoted attention was public policy research. In 1904, the WEIU took part in a multi-city Inter-Municipal Committee on Household Research that aimed to reform current conditions of household labor by bringing the practices of this informal labor market to light.⁶⁶ The Committee undertook an investigation of employment agencies in cities around the country. Each local organization listed and categorized all the employment offices in their respective cities, placing them in ranked order as “recommended, approved, or undesirable.” These lists were then publicized and circulated to patrons of each agency.⁶⁷ To this study, the Committee attributed the successful passage of stronger laws to regulate intelligence offices in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Some of the members of the Inter-Municipal Committee were tapped for subsequent federal investigations like the Dillingham Commission, and their reports helped promote public alternatives to exploitative private employment bureaus. Ohio was the first U.S. state to create free employment offices in 1890, and according to the Ohio

⁶⁵ *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the WEIU for 1911*, 20-22.

⁶⁶ This committee was a collaboration between the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union in Boston, the New York Association for Household Research in New York, and Civic Club and Housekeeper’s Alliance in Philadelphia, with additional funding from the College Settlements Association and Association of Collegiate Alumnae. *Report of the WEIU for 1905*, 30.

⁶⁷ Frances A. Kellor, “The Inter-Municipal Research Committee,” 1906, 453, Inter-Municipal Committee on Household Research, Papers, 1904-1906; 1 fol., Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Commissioner of Labor, the establishment of public offices had “completely eradicated” the “private intelligence office evil.”⁶⁸ The Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor first investigated and reported on free employment agencies in 1894, and over the next 12 years they repeatedly issued reports and endorsements of legislation for their establishment in Massachusetts.⁶⁹ In 1906, the state legislature authorized the Bureau of Statistics of Labor to establish and maintain a free employment office in Boston, which opened that December. Each month, the Boston office placed over 1,000 workers. In 1907, 15,674 workers total were placed; in 1922, 14,652 were placed.⁷⁰ The largest occupational categories placed were domestic or personal service workers and casual or common laborers—in 1907, 3,249 service sector and 4,446 laborer positions were filled.⁷¹

Public employment bureaus provided an important service, especially for male and female workers without access to alternative employment networks. Their placement services clearly competed with and to some degree displaced those of other private agencies. However, public employment bureaus did not have access to the ethnic and social networks of many private agencies, and thus could not replicate the access to information and work provided by these local networks.⁷² Moreover, while they could eliminate some of the abuses of the process of finding work, they could not challenge the conditions of these forms of labor. Finally, reformers continued to diagnose the problem of low-wage labor as a reflection of the lack of skill and training of workers. In his annual

⁶⁸ Public employment registries dated back to 1852 in France to deal with temporary unemployment. Wadlin, “Unemployment,” 58–82.

⁶⁹ Horace G. Waldin, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1894*, Public Document No. 15 (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1894), 57–81; Charles Felton Pidgin, “Free Employment Offices in the United States and Foreign Countries,” in *Thirty-Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor 1906*, Public Document No. 15 (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1903), 131–214 see also Labor Bulletin No. 14, May 1900, 45–55; Labor Bulletin No. 25, February 1903, 50–51; Labor Bulletin No. 35, 1905, 4–11.

⁷⁰ E. Leroy Sweetser, *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Public Employment Offices, 1922* (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1922), 26.

⁷¹ Chares F. Gettemy, *First Annual Report of the Chief of Bureau of Statistics of Labor on the State Free Employment Offices, 1907* (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1907), 3.

⁷² Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work, Searching for Workers*; Licht, *Getting Work*, 121–32.

report on the public employment office, the Chief of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor Charles F. Gettemy wrote:

“One of the most difficult problems with which the free public employment offices have to deal...is the large number of persons who register for employment but are lacking in suitable equipment for any particular trade or occupation where some degree of skill or experience is required...Every child should have an opportunity to learn to do one thing well and should be trained in such a way as to become an effective industrial and social unit, and since this training cannot safely be trusted to private agencies it follows that the field of public education must be broadened. Nowhere are these facts more apparent than in the daily experience of the free employment office.”

Thus, like the WEIU, leaders of the public employment office believed the expansion of training opportunities was the primary means to address the problem of the impoverished worker seeking employment.

Education as Labor Policy

For the middle-class architects of labor and public policy, education was the preferred mode of assistance to low-wage workers. In their broader diagnosis of the social ills brought about by industrialization, they believed that improving workers' skill and training would be the starting point for a broader social transformation. They pioneered many educational services that were later adopted and multiplied by the public school system itself. By voting with their feet and taking a selective approach to the educational provision offered, immigrants and African Americans were able to shape the content of this education as well. Many sought out forms of training that would help them with their search for employment, in particular instruction in the English language and naturalization procedures, as well as day-care provision in the form of nurseries and kindergarten.

Children of low-wage workers increasingly attended longer periods of primary and secondary school in order to access better white-collar jobs. However, low-wage workers tended not to take advantage of occupational training courses, mainly because they did not have free time, or were uninterested in training for jobs offered. In addition, the services that low-wage workers did take advantage of still proved a limited means of addressing working conditions directly.

The unsuccessful trial of the WEIU's School of Housekeeping was repeated by many other philanthropic organizations in Boston. The North Bennet Street Industrial School (NBSIS) also believed education could have a transformative effect on the low-wage labor market. Originally founded by philanthropist Pauline Agassiz Shaw as a settlement home in 1880, it offered a range of services to immigrants in the North End, and like the WEIU, it opened an employment office for domestic workers. But also like the WEIU, the clientele their office attracted discouraged the philanthropists of NBSIS. They blamed the applicants' condition of impoverishment on these workers' lack of skill and training: "[We] became more and more convinced that most of the poverty and suffering by which [this] building was surrounded were caused by inability, together with a want of ambition, to do anything really well." Thus, almost immediately after opening an employment office, they closed it and decided to shift their focus to occupational training. As they explained, "the giving of industrial training to those willing and young enough to learn...[was] the really hopeful work waiting to be done."⁷³

After eliminating its employment bureau, NBSIS enlarged their trade training courses: carpentry, clay modeling, shoemaking, printing, cooking, sewing, and dressmaking. Its stress on industrial education was part of the manual training movement, ideologically part of a late nineteenth century revival of craftsmanship and progressive educational theories that stressed active, hands-on

⁷³ *The Work of the North Bennet Street Industrial School from 1881 to 1887* (Boston: Rand Avery Company, 1887), 4.

learning across the country.⁷⁴ Manual training also drew on a long tradition of charity and reform schools, in which teaching a useful trade was seen as the best form of social uplift for the poor, as well as a post-Civil War movement for the industrial education of African Americans in the South, chiefly funded by Northeast philanthropists.⁷⁵ The leaders of the NBSIS believed that these manual forms of education would, in addition to providing young people with employable skills, inspire in them a stronger work ethic and deeper appreciation for the dignity of labor.⁷⁶ However, these classes did not appeal to their targeted audience. Based on the NBSIS attendance records from 1886-87, those who voluntarily enrolled in these courses were primarily dressmakers, teachers, tailors, and students.⁷⁷ These were not impoverished laborers, but an older group of middle-class female employees. The majority of these students were from the North End, but many were from disparate

⁷⁴ *The Work of the North Bennet Street Industrial School from 1887 to 1888*, 8; Marvin Lazerson, *Origins of the Urban School: Public Education in Massachusetts, 1870-1915* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); Lawrence Arthur Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Knopf, 1961).

⁷⁵ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 33-79; James D. Anderson, "The Historical Development of Black Vocational Education," in *Work, Youth, and Schooling: Historical Perspectives on Vocationalism in American Education* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), 180-222.

Direct parallels were drawn between the needs of post-emancipation blacks in the South and poor urban whites in the North. "Why Not for Whites Too" *The Boston Herald*, March 31, 1885, 4; "Mr. Joseph Lee [a prominent Boston educator] said that Boston has not only done a great deal for Hampton, but Hampton has done a great deal for Boston, by its example of the value of industrial education, of manual training, for the white man as well as the negro." "To Aid Hampton Institute," *The Boston Herald*, Feb 20, 1899, 2; "It does seem strange and it certainly is interesting that it required the solution of the problem of the education of the negro to present to the white educators the best methods of educating the whites." "Asks Help For Negro School," *Boston Daily Globe*, Aug 27, 1910, 8.

Public discussions of African American industrial education in Boston focused primarily on philanthropy for blacks in the South, rather than the small percentage of blacks in Boston who attended the public schools at high rates, as discussed in Chapter 2. Book T. Washington was a frequent guest in Boston, regularly fundraising for Hampton and Tuskegee Institute, and his philosophy of industrial education for blacks was praised highly within the circles of Boston's philanthropists and educational leaders, including Charles W. Eliot. "Hampton Institute in Need of Funds," *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb 9, 1911, 17. However, some protested Washington's appearance: In July of 1903, the black newspaper staff of *The Guardian* organized a protest of Washington's public address at a meeting of the Business Men's League at AME Zion Church in Boston, sprinkling cayenne pepper around the pulpit and interrupting speakers with questions such as "Don't you know you would help the race more by exposing the new form of slavery just outside the gates of Tuskegee than preaching submission?" In the scuffle that ensued, a protester, Bernard Charles, was attacked with a razor blade and taken to the hospital with a 5-inch gash in his side, but Charles, along with several other protesters, were the ones arrested and charged with assault. "Negroes in a Riot over Washington," *The Boston Herald*, July, 31, 1903; 1-2.

⁷⁶ *The Work of the North Bennet Street Industrial School from 1881 to 1887*, 13.

⁷⁷ North Bennet Street Industrial School (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1880-1973; Class Register and Attendance Book, 1886-1887. MC 269, Carton 1, Series IV, 1 Vol. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

neighborhoods in Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville. The geographical range of their clientele is further evidence that these classes appealed to a broad middle-class constituency, not the poorest immigrant workers.

Boston's YWCA, similarly, abandoned its employment service for domestics because of "the incompetency of the majority of those who asked for work." They formed a Training School for Domestic in 1878, open exclusively to those of "good character" over the age of 16 who committed to living within the YWCA while attending classes for six months. Due to subsequent low enrollment, however, the YWCA opened a corresponding School for Domestic Science, training not low-wage workers, but "teachers, matrons, and superintendents."⁷⁸

Indeed, the trajectory of the emerging field of home economics precisely mirrored the shifting focus of philanthropies away from low-wage workers themselves and toward female professionals. The National Household Economics Association (NHEA) was formed in 1891 out of the Women's Auxiliary of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In its first presidential address, Laura Wilkinson, a Deerfield, Massachusetts native who had become a leader in domestic economy, described the central problem that the association was dedicated to solve: the servant problem. "Our aim has been to consider the condition of the girl at service, her limitations, her hours of labor, and constantly to ask ourselves if we, in her place, without a special training, could do as well. Failing in our efforts to improve the intelligence offices, we next turned our attention to what could be done toward establishing schools where instruction could be given for housework, and to see what could be done to induce girls to take a three months' course of training before she went out to service." As she describes, the trajectory of disillusionment with employment assistance and the new focus on

⁷⁸ In 1905, while the School for Domestic Science had 11 instructors, the Training School for Domestic only had three instructors (all graduates of the School for Domestic Science). "Industrial Schools of the Christian Associations," *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin* No. 35, March 1905, 292-293.

training domestic servants was a national phenomenon. “It is my conviction,” Wilkinson added, “that two-thirds of the trouble in having housework done is because the majority will not make a study of the dainty ways of doing the work.”⁷⁹ Wilkinson went on to describe promising new attempts at household economics schools, and urged the national organization to promote similar training schools for domestics through women’s clubs around the United States. In the next years, state branches grew rapidly across the country.⁸⁰

However, an emerging group of women scientists, interested in increasing the number of women in university research and carving out new fields in industrial chemistry, nutrition, and sanitation, had a different vision for this new professional organization. Ellen Swallow Richards was one such exemplar: she studied chemistry at MIT and, although denied a doctoral degree, hired to establish and run MIT’s new Women’s Laboratory. Richards envisioned a larger role for women through their potential expertise in creating sanitary homes, more nutritious meals, and ultimately social engineering a more healthy society.⁸¹ Richards sought to shift the focus of the NHEA toward this vision of municipal housekeeping, and did so strategically.⁸² She cultivated relationships with

⁷⁹ Laura S. Wilkinson, “Household Economics,” in *The Congress of Women: Held in the Woman’s Building, World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, USA, 1893*, ed. Mary Kavanaugh Oldham Eagle (Philadelphia: International Publishing Company, 1895), 233–36.

⁸⁰ Laura Wilkinson, “National Household Economics Association Report of the Semi-Annual Meeting,” *The New England Kitchen Magazine* 1:1 (April 1894): 80-85. “National Household Economics Association: State Reports Presented at Nashville,” *The American Kitchen Magazine* 9:1 (April 1898): 33-34.

⁸¹ She called her new science “euthenics,” or the science of controllable environment, in direct response to “eugenics.” Rather than social engineering through breeding, Richards believed in social engineering through altering environmental factors. Ellen Henrietta Richards, *Euthenics, the Science of Controllable Environment: A Plea for Better Living Conditions as a First Step Toward Higher Human Efficiency* (Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1910); Pamela C. Swallow, *The Remarkable Life and Career of Ellen Swallow Richards: Pioneer in Science and Technology* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

⁸² Most scholars of home economics start with the Lake Placid conferences and Richard’s professional vision, ignoring the movement’s previous focus on domestic servants. Those who have noted this shift, such as Sarah Stage, have portrayed it as the casting off of an old-fashioned devotion to charity in exchange for a new professional and scientific enterprise. I am more interested in the implications of this shift for the domestic service labor market, and for domestic workers themselves. Sarah Stage, “Ellen Richards and the Social Significance of the Home Economics Movement,” in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, by Virginia Bramble Vincenti and Sarah Stage (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 17–34. See also Megan J. Elias, *Stir It Up: Home Economics in American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Janice Williams Rutherford, *Selling Mrs. Consumer: Christine*

members of the NHEA, inviting many leading members to a new conference at Lake Placid in 1899 that focused on the science of home economics and the need for the provision of higher education for women. At the second such conference in 1900, Henrietta Goodrich of WEIU's School of Housekeeping who shared Richard's professional vision, presented a scheme for home economics education spanning from kindergarten to a "Professional School for Home and Social Economics," on par with other university professional schools.⁸³ In response, a resolution was passed specifically endorsing the WEIU School of Housekeeping in Boston as a model for the nation.⁸⁴ The Lake Placid conferences rapidly grew in membership, and by 1903, the NHEA was absorbed into the General Federation of Women's Clubs when its last president claimed the Lake Placid proceedings were "doing much better work along the same lines."⁸⁵ In 1909, the American Home Economic Association (AHEA) was formed out of the Lake Placid meetings, with Richards as its first president. The focus of the AHEA was the professionalization of new home economics teachers and scientists.⁸⁶ These women professionals pioneered new scientific disciplines of nutrition, industrial chemistry, and sanitation. The original project of reforming the domestic service labor market, however, was abandoned.

Frederick and the Rise of Household Efficiency (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003); Carolyn M. Goldstein, *Creating Consumers: Home Economists in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

⁸³ Henrietta Goodrich, "Suggestions for a Professional School of Home and Social Economics," *Lake Placid Conference on Home Economics, Proceedings, 1900* (Lake Placid, NY: 1901), 26-40.

⁸⁴ "School of Housekeeping," Box 2, Folder 9, Women's Educational and Industrial Union Records, 1894-1955, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass

⁸⁵ Linda Hull Larned, "The National Household Economic Association, 1893-1903," *Journal of Home Economics* 1, no. 2 (April 1909): 186.

⁸⁶ This focus would even be reflected in the landmark piece of federal legislation that home economics reformers helped shape: the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, which supported agricultural, industrial, and home economics education specifically through the funding of teachers, rather than infrastructure, student aid, or general subsidies. For an analysis of the role of home economic professionals in the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, see Rima D. Apple, "Liberal Arts or Vocational Training? Home Economics Education for Girls," in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, by Sarah Stage and Virginia Bramble Vincenti (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 79-95.

Philanthropies did offer some services that were more popular for low-wage workers. These included day care services in the form of nurseries and kindergartens. The NBSIS opened a nursery during the first years of the schools' founding, run and funded by Pauline Shaw. According to attendance records of the nursery, out of 54 families who dropped off their children in 1883, 23 were Italian, 14 Irish, and the remainder a diverse mix of Canadian, Portuguese, German, Russian Jewish, and Swedish families. The Italian fathers and mothers of these children were predominantly fruit peddlers, organ grinders, and laborers. Irish fathers were laborers and fishermen, Portuguese fathers were longshoremen and cigar makers, and their wives earned extra income by washing and ironing.⁸⁷ For these families, the day care services that a nursery could provide were much more helpful than industrial training. The NBSIS continued the operation of this nursery for the next several decades, indicating that low-wage workers were able to shape the content of philanthropic services through their own attendance. However, due to its popularity, the NBSIS introduced an application process for admittance into the nursery by 1908. Of 120 applicants in 1908, 42 were admitted. Those admitted were most commonly children suffering from a parent's illness, death, or a father's desertion. Those refused were children who had parents who were under- or unemployed, in debt, in prison, a mother who "wants to work," a father who was a "lazy drinker," or who were the offspring of an illegitimate marriage.⁸⁸ Philanthropists continued to exercise their power to choose who was worthy of social services.

To justify the continuation of fairly expensive services, philanthropies adopted another approach: collaboration with the public schools. In addition to pioneering the NBSIS nursery,

⁸⁷ "North Bennet Street Industrial School (Boston, Mass.) Records 1880-1973; 'Record of Families Connected with No. Bennet Day Nursery, 1883.' MC 269, Series II, Box 101, Biv.45. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

⁸⁸ North Bennet Street Industrial School (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1880-1973; Application, 1908-09. MC 269, Series II, Box 101, Biv. 48. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Pauline Agassiz Shaw funded private kindergartens around the city, which were subsequently incorporated into the public schools system in the 1890s. The public sector also increasingly took over expensive and under-enrolled forms of occupational training. NBSIS reported in the early 1880s, “Great effort was made to obtain such action of the School Board as should make it possible for classes to be sent here for industrial training during school hours, and under school discipline.” In 1883, boys from the Eliot School in the North End were sent the NBSIS for 2 hours per week of manual training instruction, expanded to women (who took cooking classes) in 1885.⁸⁹ For these immigrant sons and daughters who might not otherwise have attended, these were effectively short elective courses. The industrial training courses continued to draw more affluent students: according to attendance records, students from other school districts, including high school students, came to the North End for these classes.

These cases reveal an important trend of Boston philanthropy, and national philanthropic leaders, in the decades after 1880. Many social reformers believed that the primary cause of “poverty and suffering” was “inability” and “want of ambition.”⁹⁰ They genuinely believed that education could play a fundamental role, not only in helping individuals, but also in elevating the status of occupations like domestic service. Education was less controversial and easier to implement than other forms of labor reform, and they became the most common services provided by these organizations. Many of these women followed the professional ambitions of their college educated staff in aligning more closely with institutions of higher education for women, to help carve new professional spaces for women’s scientific research. However, many of these endeavors belied the original mission of these philanthropies, as the primary constituency was not low-wage earners, but middle and upper class women. Services such as nurseries, kindergartens, English language and

⁸⁹*The Work of the North Bennet Street Industrial School from 1881 to 1887* (Boston: Rand Avery Company, 1887), 5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

citizenship classes were more popular among low-wage earners. These services, however, were increasingly shifted over and developed by the public sector.

Public Schools

Education became the primary public policy used to aid low-wage workers in the early twentieth century. In contrast to the small number of laborers or service workers who enrolled in the classes offered by philanthropic organizations, thousands of youth and adult low-wage workers attended public schools. Public schools offered the institutional structure through which to offer wide range of social services. Unlike European counterparts, in the weak and decentralized U.S. state, municipal educational bureaucracies were the most well developed public institutional infrastructure available for social welfare provision. In a political landscape with limited support for the expansion of social services, public education was a popular public service through which reformers could slowly build the welfare state, especially in large cities like Boston.⁹¹ Thus, many philanthropic reformers worked with educators and public school officials to shift services that had been pioneered in the private sector to the public sector.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, public education had expanded significantly to serve Bostonians across all classes. In the 1840s, Massachusetts Superintendent of Public Schools Horace Mann had spearheaded the common school movement that became a model for universal public elementary education around the country. Common schools drew on a republican, Protestant

⁹¹ Miriam Cohen, "Reconsidering Schools and the American Welfare State," *History of Education Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (December 1, 2005): 511–37; Tracy L. Steffes, *School, Society, and State: A New Education to Govern Modern America, 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

tradition of cultural and moral education, the assimilation of immigrants—especially Irish Catholics—into the nation, and the expansion and centralization of public services. A parallel democratic tradition of education stressed practical forms that would aid the working class.⁹² Across the political spectrum, education was framed as a panacea to a broad array of audiences. As opposed to selective welfare services that only targeted the poor, education had long been framed in Massachusetts as a universal public good in the interest of the commonweal. The majority of Boston’s school expenditure, which had been the city’s single largest expense since the 19th century, went to public elementary schools. In these classes, young people were taught basic literacy and numeracy as well as moral behavior, manners, and discipline. Schools not only provided skills for students, but they also effectively functioned as free day care for parents who had to work long hours to support their families. As child labor rates decreased and the opportunity cost of attending schools dropped for the lowest-wage workers, parents increasingly sent their children to school.

The education of immigrants through the school system, a central focus of progressive reformers, reflected a spectrum of attitudes. Some, fearing the displacement of Anglo-Saxon power and cultural mores by what they believed to be inferior immigrant customs, culture, and religion, hoped education would “Americanize” recent immigrants. Many of Boston’s leading philanthropists, including settlement house leader Robert Woods, and school committee members, including pioneer of school playgrounds Joseph Lee, also belonged to the Immigration Restriction League, founded by Harvard graduates in 1898.⁹³ Others expressed a more tolerant, even celebratory view of cultural pluralism. One of these reformers was Boston school superintendent Frank V. Thompson.

⁹² Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Macmillan, 1983); David Montgomery, “The Shuttle and the Cross: Weavers and Artisans in the Kensington Riots of 1844,” *Journal of Social History* 5, no. 4 (July 1, 1972): 411–46.

⁹³ Barbara Miller Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 100–140.

Thompson had attended public schools in Maine before attending Catholic high school and St. Anselm College, and moved up the ranks within New England from a mathematics teacher to principal, before becoming the headmaster of Boston's High School of Commerce in 1906. In 1910 he became assistant superintendent and quickly took under his purview some of the central areas of school reform of the day: "the numerous problems concerning industrial and commercial education in high schools, trade schools, continuation schools and evening schools, cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce, WEIU, labor organizations and employers."⁹⁴ This experience enabled him to become superintendent from 1918-1921. His *Schooling the Immigrant*, published during his time as superintendent, expressed his more inclusive of education for citizenship. He argued that native-born Americans must "assume fundamental racial equality" and rid themselves of the "delusion" that they constituted a "superior race." Rather, "a progressive stage of civilization is characterized, among other qualities, by the capacity of its citizens to recognize both the shortcomings of their own group and the virtues of other nationalities." This recognition of equality was what "we offer to the immigrant when asking him to join the fellowship of our democracy."⁹⁵ He advocated English language instruction as a means of promoting an exchange of ideas fundamental to a democracy: "We shall not be so much concerned that the immigrant should, by reason of a knowledge of our tongue, be able to avoid [work] accidents ...or even be able to read food regulations. Rather, we will be concerned that he may be able to share in our citizenship, learn our ideals, contribute his share to the thinking and action of the nation."⁹⁶ In this way, education for citizenship was fundamentally the same for both native-born and foreign-born. In the immediate aftermath of WWI, when calls for "Americanization" reached a new height, Thompson stressed the role of the public school in

⁹⁴ Franklin B. Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools*, 1913, 8.

⁹⁵ Frank Victor Thompson, *Schooling of the Immigrant* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 370.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

promoting the best democratic values of the United States, rather than imposing any program autocratically.⁹⁷ He encouraged replacing the term “Americanization” with national unification and citizenship, which “is not a matter of conversion from a lower to a higher plane, but rather a process of joining equally meritorious forces for a better common nationalism.”⁹⁸

Thompson believed it was a fundamental public responsibility to provide this form of democratic education. He pioneered a wide range educational programs for immigrants, as well as the expansion of industrial training and commercial education that will be explored in future chapters. As he argued, a commitment to public service meant “in large part the carrying out of the people’s will.”⁹⁹ Thompson embraced the public schools as multi-purpose institutions, at the forefront of progressive reform: “A full report upon the activities of the school in recent years would be an encyclopedia of social, industrial, health and civic issues. The school system is really a cross section of the sum total of progressive social effort.”¹⁰⁰

The programs of the Boston school system reflected a constantly negotiated meeting point between educators’ ideals and immigrant workers own needs. As foreign-born children increasingly attended elementary schools, teachers and administrators added specialized classes for English language learning. Initially, recent immigrants who did not know the English language were placed in “ungraded classes,” first organized in Boston in 1883 in the Eliot and Hancock school districts in the North End as a repository for students who were too old for their grade, or too “dull or

⁹⁷ “We may suspect the so-called 100-per-cent Americans of holding autocratic views with regard to the proper program of Americanization. With undoubted zeal and single-minded purpose they would within a brief period of time compel all non-English-speaking immigrants...to acquire the language; they would compel the taking out of citizenship papers and conformity in dress, manners, and mode of living to that standard of native Americans. They would by edict abolish the Little Italies, the Little Hungaries, and the ghettos.....If Americanism is primarily a mode of thinking and feeling, the compulsionist is forced to maintain the theory that habits of thinking and feeling can be manufactured by force and decree.” Ibid., 13.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 360–71.

⁹⁹ Thompson, *Annual Report of the Superintendent* (1920), 19.

¹⁰⁰ Thompson, *Annual Report of the Superintendent* (1921), 24.

backward.”¹⁰¹ In 1883, the ungraded population was 834 students; by 1900 it had increased to 2,364 students.¹⁰² As “special” education classes were first formed in 1901, ungraded classes become almost exclusively English language classes for immigrants, dubbed “steamer classes,” before these students were transferred back into the regular grades.¹⁰³

In 1902 the Boston School Committee launched new evening “Education Centers” in different Boston neighborhoods. Modeled on social settlements, these centers would offer “more extended use of the school plant for the especial benefit of those children who are obliged to leave school at the age of fourteen or thereabouts.” This age concerned social reformers and school administrators because those compelled to work at a young age entered “blind-alley” jobs that provided little possibility for advancement. Moreover, these jobs subjected young workers to an “entirely new set of temptations.” It was the responsibility of the schools to ensure these young, mainly immigrant child laborers were given opportunities to “become good and helpful citizens.”¹⁰⁴ To distinguish them from both the “purely educational” classes of the regular day and evening schools, the education center courses offered the “closest practicable connection between the instruction and the business and industries of actual life...their time is employed in acquiring knowledge and skill likely to be of service in their daily occupations.”¹⁰⁵ In other words, these were intended to be vocational courses to help young workers advance in their occupations and strengthen their character.

¹⁰¹ Edwin Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools* 1883, 3; Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools* 1902, 57. Early nineteenth-century schools had been “ungraded” by default, as these schools were too small to grade children by age with yearly promotions. The innovation of grading required much larger school populations, which developed first in urban centers. Grading, however, created the new problem of children who did not fit into the grade of their age-cohort, or ability level.

¹⁰² Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools*, 1900, 89.

¹⁰³ Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools*, 1912, 27.

¹⁰⁴ *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston*, 1902, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools*, 1905, 84.

Like their philanthropic counterparts, however, job-related courses offered in these centers proved unattractive to low-wage workers. The flexibility of these centers, however, allowed their local communities to shape the services offered. In the spring of 1902, the first two centers opened: one in the North End, a crowded immigrant district, and one in Jamaica Plain, one of Boston's new streetcar suburbs. The divergence between the two centers reflected the particular locations of these centers and the demands of their particular constituencies.¹⁰⁶ Both centers offered courses in sewing, dressmaking, embroidery, millinery, and cooking. In each center, the students enrolled were not 14-year-olds just out of grammar school, but grown women between 20-25 years old who likely were pursuing these courses in their leisure time or to improve their skill while employed as dressmakers, tailors, or seamstresses.¹⁰⁷ In addition, the Jamaica Plain center offered a class to prepare for the civil service exam, with 51 pupils enrolled, which clearly attracted an already well-educated, upwardly mobile group. In total, the vocational classes offered by the Jamaica Plain center enrolled over twice the number of those in the North End, despite the latter being the most densely populated neighborhood in Boston.

While the occupational classes offered in the North End did not appeal to immigrant families, the North End center organized other services that proved much more popular within this community. During the summer months a "vacation school" was created that included a

¹⁰⁶ The school committee built in flexibility for the local communities to shape the offerings: "Perfect freedom had been given to each to meet, in its own way, the needs of the community in which it was located. Instruction was furnished in almost every study and industrial pursuit for which a sufficient demand appeared." Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools*, 1905, 83.

¹⁰⁷ The North End had 220 women enrolled in these classes, on average 20 years old. Jamaica Plain, despite being a much less densely populated area, had an enrollment of 317 women in these classes who were older, averaging 25 years. The curriculum of the classes also reflected class differences. The cooking class in the North End offered instruction in basic table manners and the preparation of the simplest foods: "bread-making, the preparation of soups and broths, the making of good coffee, tea and cocoa." By contrast, the course in Jamaica Plain catered to a wealthier middle-class housewife, offering instruction in "the cooking of meat, fish, vegetables, the making of salads, and particular attention was paid to the utilizing of 'left-over' material." JP also offered a course in vocal music that "resolved itself into an old-fashioned singing-school such as many of its members had attended in younger days," likely a more middle-class constituency that would have had prior experience in music school. *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston*, 1902, 18-23

playground, field trips and excursions, and kindergarten classes. “The large yard of the Hancock school was equipped with swings, tilting horses, and various games, and kept open all day, for boys and girls not over ten years of age.” This summer day camp had an average daily attendance of 250 in the morning and 350 in the afternoon—higher than their course offerings for the entire week combined. “Many mothers came every day with their...little ones to watch the games and sports, and to hundreds of children in the North End it was an ideal resort.” Additionally, “every pleasant day classes of 15 to 20 pupils went to the woods, parks or seashore,” including the Arnold Arboretum, Middlesex Fells, and Revere Beach. The five-cent transportation cost was provided if a child did not have sufficient fare.¹⁰⁸ Finally, public baths were opened in one of the district schoolhouses, and 200 people took advantage of these baths daily. In sum, services that offered childcare and entertainment were the most popular services to these impoverished populations.

In 1907, these education centers were merged into the evening school department of the school committee, which increasingly prioritized English-language instruction and citizenship training.¹⁰⁹ Evening elementary schools had been founded in the early nineteenth century, primarily catering to youth who had left school for work before completing eighth grade. By 1910, these evening schools became almost entirely schools for adults from Eastern and Southern Europe. Out of 12,000 students enrolled in evening elementary schools in 1915, 86% were born outside the U.S.¹¹⁰ Immigrants took advantage of new offerings, including English language classes and citizenship training for the naturalization process, launched in 1915.¹¹¹ School administrators

¹⁰⁸ *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1902*, 18-23

¹⁰⁹ Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1908*, 54.

¹¹⁰ Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1915*, 78.

¹¹¹ “Material for reading is quite generally patriotic in character and the instruction in the rights and duties of citizenship is made very specific, answering to the standards of citizenship set up by the requirements of the naturalization process.” Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1915*, 19.

repeatedly called for better language textbooks, more appropriate teaching materials, and extended evening school terms for adult immigrants.¹¹² While a sharp decline in immigration during WWI forced the school committee to close five evening schools, they reopened and actively promoted adult immigrant education after the war.¹¹³

School officials like Thompson worked to accommodate the needs and schedules of immigrants in order to ensure their maximum participation in schools. Many immigrant workers, especially women, were not able to attend evening courses due to child-care responsibilities or late work shifts. For this reason, the Boston school committee launched a Day School for Immigrants in 1916, catering primarily to hotel workers and mothers. During these classes, kindergarten classes were provided for the young children of mothers taking these classes as a form of day care. Not surprisingly, according to the school committee report, “Mothers have been most enthusiastic.”¹¹⁴

The most novel innovation of the school committee, advocated as a way to reach the greatest number of immigrants, were classes for immigrant workers on the job, or “factory classes.” In 1911 the school committee began to organize and promote “classes for non-English speaking people in factories or other places of business” such that “attendance cannot be avoided.”¹¹⁵ Under the auspices of the Day School for Immigrants the number of courses increased, and as Thompson reported in 1919: “the school system stands ready to supply a trained teacher, and to furnish books and supplies” in “any section of the city, in any suitable accommodations, school buildings, factories, stores or elsewhere, at any hour of the day or evening” whenever a group of 15 employees could be

¹¹² Charles M. Lamphrey, “Supplementary Report on Evening Schools,” in *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools*, 1907, 49; Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools*, 1915, 78.

¹¹³ Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools*, 1917, 61.

¹¹⁴ Thompson, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools*, 1919, 32.

¹¹⁵ Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools*, 1913, 104.

formed.¹¹⁶ These public school efforts were supported by the Boston Chamber of Commerce, which formed an Americanization of Immigrants Committee in 1916 to promote the formation of these classes within member firms, and developed closer ties to representative leaders of different immigrant groups in Boston.¹¹⁷ The Dennison Manufacturing Company, a large paper-product company in Framingham, was one such firm, which established in 1922 one class “in citizenship, as a result of which ten employees are securing their final papers for naturalization and a considerable number have taken out first papers.”¹¹⁸ Many large employers saw the benefits of these social services for maintaining morale, improving communication, and changing the cultural habits of their workers.¹¹⁹ Some large employers initiated such courses on their own, others cooperated with philanthropic agencies, but soon most of these courses were funded by the public sector. Publically-subsidized teachers and supplies alleviated employers from this responsibility and financial burden. The immigrant day courses peaked in 1924, with an enrollment of 769 men and 1,254 women in 85 classes throughout the city.¹²⁰

While most of these day courses provided English instruction and naturalization services, some were more explicitly forms of job-training, or gender-appropriate cultural education. In 1913, the school committee launched voluntary “continuation schools,” based on similar schools pioneered in Germany, in which youth who left school early to work would receive job-related

¹¹⁶ Thompson, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1919*, 31-32.

¹¹⁷ Case 5, Folder: “Americanization of Immigrants”; “The Education of Immigrants”; “Foreign-Born Individuals,” Boston Chamber of Commerce Records, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA; Promotional materials advertised the ability of companies to secure free teaching staff from the public schools to begin such classes. George Francis Quimby, *Americanization in Industry: How to Organize English and Citizenship Classes* (Boston: Associated Industries of Massachusetts, 1919).

¹¹⁸ Works Manager Report 1923-1924, Box 164, Dennison Manufacturing Company Records, 1815-1990, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

¹¹⁹ Thompson, *Schooling of the Immigrant*, 56.

¹²⁰ *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1924*, 59; Michael J. Downey, “Report of the Director of Evening Schools,” in *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1924*, 73.

training part-time, either in the workplace itself or in school buildings. While the bulk of these early continuation classes were designed for young employees in retail and business, one household arts continuation school opened in 1912 for girls from “foreign, poor homes” who worked in large candy factories. The school principal praised these large employers as “broad-minded” enough to allow their employees to attend two hours, twice per week, without loss of pay. NBSIS rented rooms for this course of instruction. These young women were taught sewing, simple cooking, hygiene, character building, the use of money, and the “wisdom of saving.” The school attempted to “keep up an atmosphere of a home where a mother with her daughter and their friends are learning the necessary things of life.” In this case, these girls were not receiving instruction in any technical skills related to their current employment, but rather gendered cultural instruction in domesticity.¹²¹

Rather than improving their working conditions directly, these educational services indirectly benefited low-wage workers by providing some of the habits and behaviors preferred by employers. This form of cultural education could serve as a convenient means of selecting loyal employees, and cultivating a smaller number for leadership roles. At the candy factory where the household arts school was held, the employer revealed his rationale for sending his employees to the school:

[The first year] 15 were chosen from 1 department...I decided that none but Italians should be sent at that time. I forgot just what the reasons for that were. Perhaps there were more Italians in that room than any other nationality...This year...girls were chosen from five different departments, and some of these girls we were pleased to call Americans, some were Italians, some Jewish. They were selected with the idea in mind of securing those who would have the most influence over others, for there are always in the factory, just as in the school, certain ones that are leaders, and we try nearly as possible to select the kind that are leaders.¹²²

¹²¹ Franklin Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1915*, 79; Boston, Mass School Committee, *Household Arts School Misc. Pamphlets*, Gutman Library Special Collections, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

¹²² Boston, Mass School Committee, *Household Arts School Misc. Pamphlets*, Gutman Library Special Collections, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

This statement reveals the employer's evolution from the rather haphazard decision to choose Italians, to an attempt to educate "leaders" who might be able to influence others, presumably in ways that would foster loyalty and morale in the work place. A male employer could likely draw upon the habits of "character building" and domesticity learned in this continuation school to enforce the proper behavior of young women in the workplace. Young women who learned these behaviors would likely have an advantage at work; at the same time, their terms were dictated by employers and premised on a selective process that did not help all workers.

In 1914, the Boston school committee took a further step in promoting educational services for low-wage workers. New legislation in Massachusetts that came into effect in September of 1913 mandated that 14-16 year olds be either in school or at work for at least 6 hours a day and take classes at a continuation school for at least 4 hours per week. Before turning 21, students had to obtain an appropriate employment certificate, issued by the local school authorities, and remain in continuation school until achieving a 4th grade literacy level.¹²³ In keeping with this new law, the Boston School Committee mandated compulsory continuation school attendance for all working 14-16-year-olds. The Superintendent justified this move as a way to improve the social opportunities for child workers who entered low-wage jobs upon leaving school. As he wrote, "The Commonwealth provides lavishly for those children who do not go to work between the ages of 14 and 18, expending upon them two or three times as much per capita as upon children below the age of 14. This country stands for equal opportunity, but is not providing it when it offers means of self-improvement to one group of individuals and withholds it from another."¹²⁴ According to the

¹²³ Dyer explains in detail the four relevant pieces of legislation under the Act of 1913: Chapter 779, 805, 831 and 467. Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent* (1913), 173-180.

¹²⁴ Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1913*, 108.

superintendent, relevant education and training should be provided to the young people who were required to work at a young age to improve their economic prospects.

The first compulsory continuation school opened in September of 1914 enrolled a total of 4,000 students in the first year.¹²⁵ Twelve classes were housed within employers' establishments, and teachers were sent directly to meet the pupils in their workplace. The rest of the classes were located at a rented building on La Grange Street in downtown Boston. They met at all times of day, to "best suit the convenience of employers and serve the interests of the pupils."¹²⁶ Classes offered industrial training relevant to the students' current occupations, and were divided into trade extension classes for "pupils in skilled employment," pre-vocational classes for "those who have a well-defined vocational aim but whose employment does not afford preparation for such vocation," and finally, general continuation classes for "those who have neither skilled employment nor specific vocational aim."¹²⁷ Each of these classes devoted a significant portion of time to training for citizenship and "the nobility of work as service."¹²⁸ Employers had to agree to let their young employees take time off from work, and often offered their worksites as locations for these classes. School officials sent teachers to follow up with students, both to check in on them as well as to "establish cordial, cooperative relations with the employer."¹²⁹ Similar continuation schools became a popular phenomenon in the 1920s in cities nationwide.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1915*, 15.

¹²⁶ Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1913*, 65.

¹²⁷ Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1914*, 65.

¹²⁸ Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1913*, 111-112.

¹²⁹ Jeremiah E. Burke, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1922*, 84.

¹³⁰ By 1924, at least 27 states had established continuation schools, enrolling nearly 200,000 youth. Franklin J. Keller, *Day Schools for Young Workers: the Organization and Management of Part-Time and Continuation Schools* (New York: The Century Co., 1924), xii.

How were these classes actually experienced by young workers? Minnie Corder, the Russian immigrant we met earlier, worked at a large clothing company sewing buttonholes on men's coats when she arrived in Boston in 1911. Because she was under 16, she was required to attend an evening school and "bring an attendance certificate to the bookkeeper every week." For Minnie, this school was a gratifying experience: "The schoolroom was the nicest place I had ever seen. It was warm and well lit. The teacher was a law student during the day and taught young immigrants at night, treating us as if we were his lost relatives. I was in school at last."¹³¹ Camela Cerqua, the Italian immigrant we also met earlier, had a different experience. She immigrated to the North End in 1903 at the age of 9 to join her father, and soon went to work at a candy factory in Cambridge. She recalls: "I didn't have any education. I went to the Cushman School [in the North End] at night, but we didn't have to learn too many subjects, just your name, your address. We had a teacher, her name was Miss Hatch. She was a young girl. She'd say 'Who knows how to sing Italian songs?' So we didn't learn too much. That's why I don't know how to read and write too good."¹³² Minnie Corder and Camela Cerqua reveal the range of school experiences of recent immigrants.

In some cases, the public schools took on the role of an employment bureau for young teenagers seeking work. Since unemployed youth were required to attend compulsory continuation schools, they served as an attractive pool of potential workers for employers. During the post-war business recession, according to the Superintendent of Continuation Schools, the school system had established a "flourishing" cooperative relationship with employers. As he wrote in 1922, "Literally, hundred of employers now know that it is possible to telephone to the school when boys or girls are needed and that in the out-of-work class may usually be found the particular type necessary to fill the particular vacancy." In this way, the school system enhanced the ability of one of the most

¹³¹ Kenneally, *The South End*, 6.

¹³² Roboff and Kenneally, *The North End*, 18.

vulnerable populations, unemployed, young immigrant workers, to find jobs during times of depression. This service was justified as a way of increasing the perceived value of education by the “business men of the city,” helping them realize “what part-time education can accomplish for their young employees.”¹³³

Why did employers agree to collaborate with the public schools for these educational services? In 1922 the school committee sent a questionnaire to employers asking what they believed their 14-16 year old workers should be taught in continuation schools, and inviting “any other suggestions which would enable us the better to serve the employers of Boston.” The answers to this survey shed light on what employers valued about education for their workers. The most common qualities employers recommended were: “Neatness, a sense of responsibility, initiative, willingness, reliability, ambition, real interest in the work, ability to follow instruction, punctuality, and general intelligence.” Employers also wrote in: “Teach them respect for authority and elderly people.” “Warn them of the dangers of bad companions, corner gang, etc.” “Teach them to give up smoking.” “Teach discipline.” “Brace up the weak spots in the three R’s by practice and review.” “Ground the pupils in the fundamentals of general education.”¹³⁴ These responses reveal that employers valued many of the same middle-class behavioral and cultural norms already taught by the public schools, and were willing to cooperate with them. They also suggest that employers preferred workers with higher levels of education, not necessarily for any specific job-related skills or “human capital,” but for these other cultural and behavioral qualities taught in schools.

Indeed, for the next generation of children who attended school for longer periods of time, specialized vocational part-time schools were soon eclipsed by enrollment in primary and secondary

¹³³ Ibid, 87.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 86.

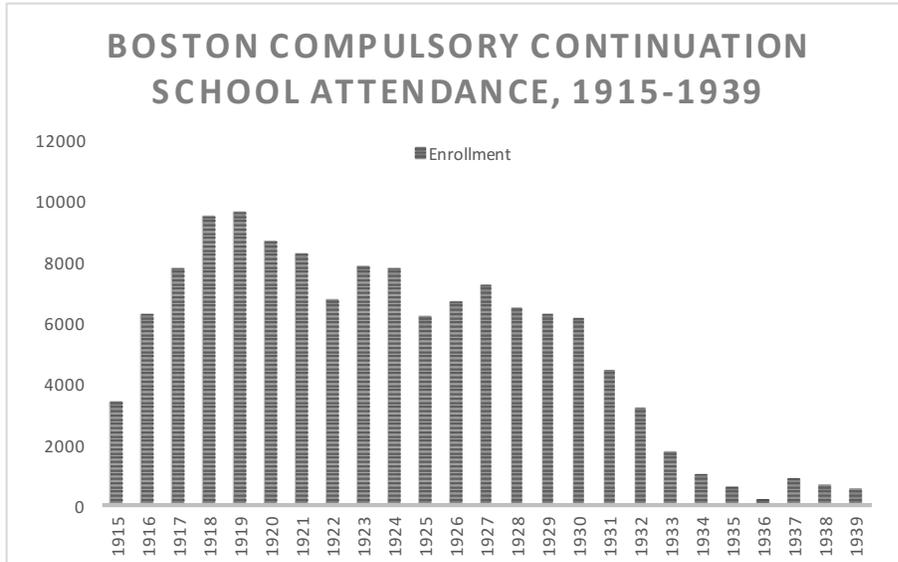


Figure 2.11

Sources: *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1915-1939*.

schools. This shift is exemplified in the effective collapse of the compulsory continuation schools for 14-16 year olds in the wake of the Great Depression, depicted in Figure 2.11.

Occupation-focused continuation schools had experienced a wartime

boom as more young teenagers went to work and attended school part-time, peaking at 9,651 students in 1919. This number was even higher than the 9,241 14-16 year olds enrolled in all of Boston's high schools that same year.¹³⁵ However, as youth employment declined, especially after 1930, 14-16 year olds tended to attend general day schools full time. The part-time continuation school was rendered obsolete.¹³⁶

The rise of enrollment of young people was extended from the middle and upper classes to the sons and daughters of the low-wage workers. Figure 2.12 breaks down the rise in school enrollment among the 14-16 year old children of professionals, clerical workers, artisans, and laborers in Boston.¹³⁷ The rates of attendance varied significantly by class in 1880, with only 42% of

¹³⁵ *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1919*, 17, 58.

¹³⁶ *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1915-1939*.

¹³⁷ *IPUMS 1880-1940*.

the sons and daughters of laborers in school at this age, compared to 73% of the children of professionals. By 1940, however, the attendance rate across all classes had reached 90% or above.

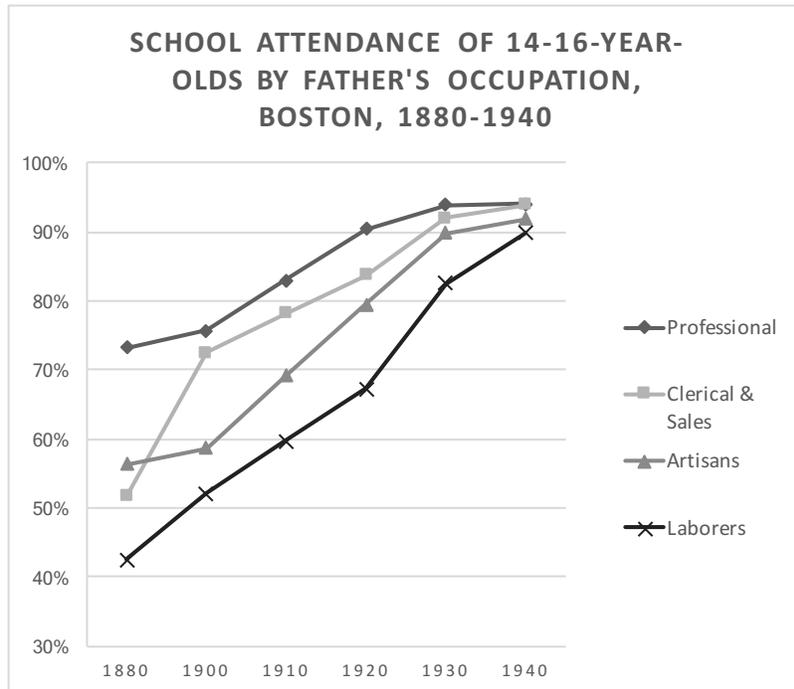


Figure 2.12

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

The vast majority of students enrolled in public elementary and high schools. These schools had over time incorporated a range of new curricular options developed as vocational courses, including mechanical arts courses for men and “practical arts” or home economics courses for women, taught by a new group of specialized teachers. However, these courses comprised no more than one or two class per year for most students.¹³⁸ One study in 1923 found that in eastern cities, only one in twelve

¹³⁸ In 1920, for instance, manual training and drawing in elementary grades were typically twice per week. “Special Syllabus Drawing and Manual Training – Grades IV, V., VI, VII, VII.” *School Document No. 6* (Boston: 1920) In the intermediate school, which offered more differentiated tracks of study, including “mechanical arts” for boys and “practical arts” for girls, students chose one to two classes per year from a variety of electives, while “the ordinary time devoted to academic subjects in these grades has not been reduced.” “Report or Survey of Intermediate Schools and Classes,” *School Document No. 19* (Boston: 1920), 27-29. 22. For the “general curriculum” in Boston’s high schools in 1917, students took one course each in drawing, mechanical drawing, and domestic art every year, while those in the industrial or practical arts curriculum took 2-3 courses per year. Course requirements also included physical training and

high school girls enrolled in home economics courses.¹³⁹ The primary curriculum consisted of English, history, foreign language, mathematics, and science. These courses offered the best advantages for the fastest growing sector of employment for young people: office and sales work. Extracurricular activities also became a central feature of a public school education and promoted a new youth culture that fostered social and cultural skills.

The social environment created by peers and teachers considerably shaped student's experiences. Often, these were challenging for the children of recent immigrants. One Italian immigrant recalls the detrimental impact of the lack of any Italian teachers:

You don't know how it feels to grow up in a district like this. You go to the first grade—Miss O'Rourke. Second grade—Miss Casey. Third grade—Miss Chalmers. Fourth grade—Miss Mooney. And so on...None of them are Italians... When the Italian boy sees that none of his own people have the good jobs, why should he think he is as good as the Irish or the Yankees? It makes him feel inferior.¹⁴⁰

From this account, it is clear that the stated goal of school officials was only one of many factors shaping the experience, aspirations, and trajectories of youth in schools. Far more than accumulating human capital, students were also learning about the ethnic and racial hierarchies that would come to structure their future opportunities.

hygiene, intended to ensure students' physical health. "Curricula for the General High Schools," *School Document No. 9* (Boston: 1917), 1-20.

¹³⁹ Apple, "Liberal Arts or Vocational Training? Home Economics Education for Girls," 89.

¹⁴⁰ Roboff and Kenneally, *The North End*, 15.

The Limits of Public Education

Young people were most able to benefit from new educational services. Many adult immigrants simply did not have time for schooling, and administrators like Frank Thompson repeatedly complained about the irregularity and low attendance of adult immigrants.¹⁴¹ For these workers, education offered few advantages. As child labor declined and young people increasingly moved into new growing sectors of work, low-wage work was filled by an older demographic. Figures 2.13 and 2.14 depict the percentage of workers in each age cohort by year. While the median age of laborers in 1880 was 40 years old, the median shifted to over 50 by 1940. This age shift is even more obvious in the case of domestic servants. The median age of a domestic servant in 1880 was about 20 years old, but by 1940, it was between 40 and 50 years old. New educational services may have helped their children, but mothers, fathers, single adults, and newer waves of adult immigrants filled these positions.

¹⁴¹ Thompson, *Schooling of the Immigrant*, 372.



Figure 2.13
Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

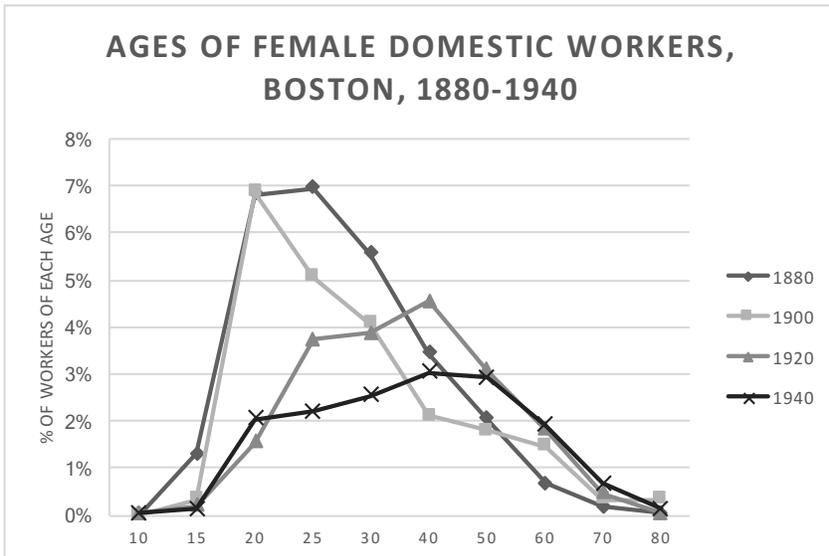


Figure 2.14
Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

For most of these workers, level of education had very little impact on their ability to find work. Nor was it the first priority of employers. Want ads placed in newspapers reveal the sorts of

traits employers cared about for their low-wage workers, even after WWI. Gender was still the most obvious trait that structured the labor market, reflected in the division of the Help Wanted pages in the *Boston Globe* in 1920 into Male Help and Female Help. Most low-wage work was advertised without any other qualifiers: “Kitchen Help,” “Waitresses wanted for table work,” “Laborers: Construction and state road job; bring baggage ready ship early Monday morning.”¹⁴² Age was the next most common: “Girls 14 years of age and over to work on lace curtains; light, clean, steady work”; “Young man to work in lunch room.”¹⁴³ Employers seeking domestic service, despite the declining number of women entering these jobs, were still some of the most particular. However, rather than education, these employers demanded experience, references, and a specific race or religion: “Experienced Protestant chambermaid assistant to working housekeeper, not over 40 years old”; “General maid wanted for family, two adults, two children: references required.”¹⁴⁴ The other relevant traits for low-wage work were a certain general appearance and behavior that conformed to middle- and upper-class norms: “Garage night-man: must be sober and industrious”; “Errand boy: must be neat and clean.”¹⁴⁵ To the extent that specific traits of low-wage workers for employers were required, they were not principally related to education, but rather to features such as gender, age, religion, and personal behavior. Some of these qualities, such as appearance and behavioral norms, could be learned in school, and increasingly were by young people in Boston. Others, however, reflected the long established racial and gender patterns perpetuated by employers.

The limits of schooling to combat the unequal racial structure of the labor market were nowhere more obvious than in the case of African Americans. Already by 1900, African American

¹⁴² “Female Help Wanted,” *Boston Globe*, August 8, 1920, 22; “Male Help Wanted,” *Boston Globe*, September 13, 1920, 13.

¹⁴³ “Female Help Wanted,” *Boston Globe*, August 8, 1920, 22; “Male Help Wanted,” *Boston Globe*, August 8, 1920, 22.

¹⁴⁴ “Female Help Wanted,” *Boston Globe*, March 31, 1920, 19.

¹⁴⁵ “Male Help Wanted,” *Boston Globe*, September 13, 1920, 13.

children attended school at greater rates than the children of immigrants.¹⁴⁶ In addition, if we examine only the children of laborers, African American children were more likely than whites or Irish to attend school throughout this entire 60-year period, with the exception of 1930, as Figure 2.15 shows.

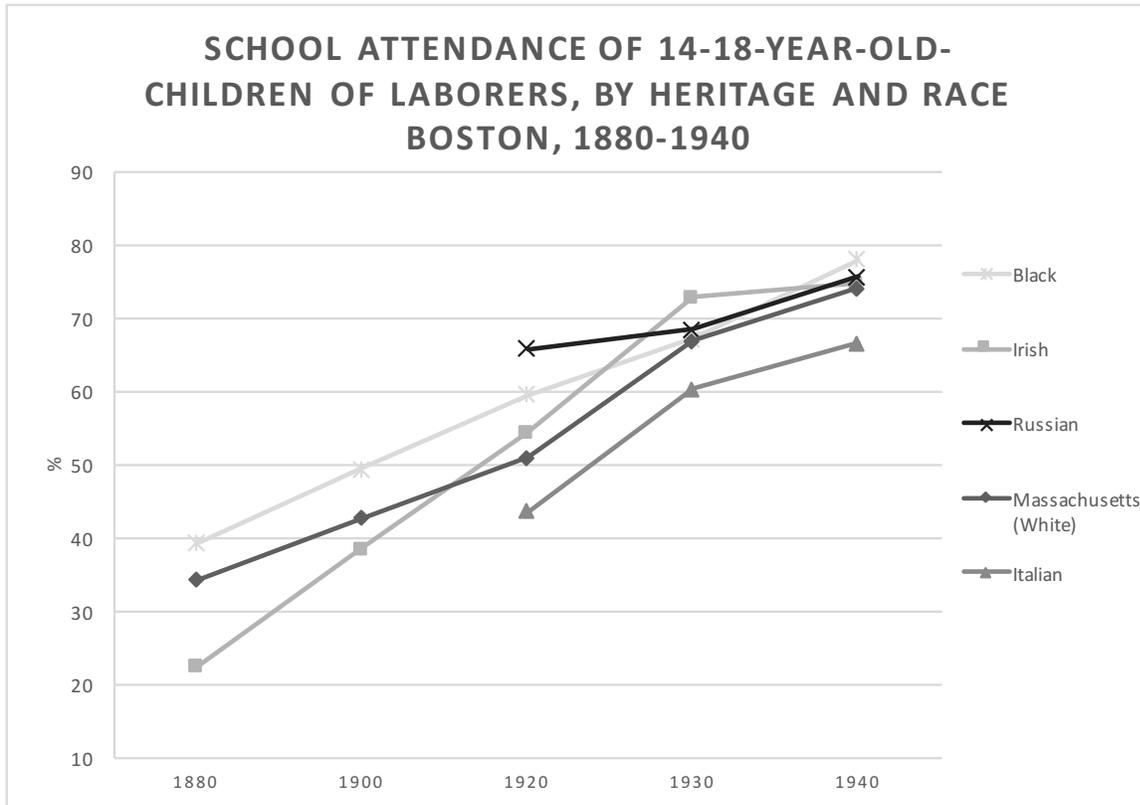


Figure 2.15

Sources: IPUMS 880-1940.

These high rates were likely due to the fact that it was harder for black children to find alternative employment, as well as the strong aspiration of black migrants to Massachusetts to receive an education. Julius C. Chappelle was one of the only black state legislators in late-nineteenth-century Massachusetts, and representative of the small Boston middle-class black community. Born in South

¹⁴⁶ Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians*, 205.

Carolina, Julius moved to Boston in 1870 and worked as a barber while attending night school to earn a high school diploma. When elected to the state legislature, he pushed for an employment bureau for black women, free textbooks, and free evening schools. He believed education to be crucial to black social and economic advancement.¹⁴⁷

Despite the growth of school attendance for African Americans, however, racial discrimination kept them in the lowest-paying laborer and service jobs. George Adams, a resident of the South End in the 1920s whom we met at the beginning of this chapter, wrote: “I remember my sisters doing summer work in the laundries on West Newton Street. There were Jews, Italians and Irish in the laundries also, but only because they lacked formal education or any other opportunity at the time. A Black who had talent, some capability, was still forced to accept employment in those areas.”¹⁴⁸ The experience of African Americans shattered the notion that education alone could improve one’s working conditions, or provide a way out of low-wage work.¹⁴⁹ The world of low-wage work remained fundamentally structured by power relations, both between employers and employees, as well as the racial, ethnic, and gender divisions among workers. These divisions would fundamentally shape, and ultimately limit, the emerging forms of labor and political organization of low-wage workers in this period.

¹⁴⁷ Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty: Boston 1865-1900*, 84.

¹⁴⁸ Kenneally, *The South End*, 19.

¹⁴⁹ Educational provision was also structured by inequality. Adam Nelson examines the persistence of educational inequality for African Americans and educational politics at the local, state, and federal level in Boston over the next several decades in *The Elusive Ideal: Equal Educational Opportunity and the Federal Role in Boston’s Public Schools, 1950-1985* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Organized Labor and Political Power

Laborers and service workers did pursue various alternative strategies to build political and economic power. Ethnic ties on the job, rooted in local immigrant communities, not only facilitated access to employment but also helped initiate new forms of labor organization. Some successfully formed labor unions to represent their interests. Irish work gangs were predecessors of political ward bosses and craft unions that would come to dominate Boston politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁵⁰ Dominic D'Allessandro, an Italian labor agent from Boston and part of an extensive Italian padrone network, became the primary leader of Italian unionization across the East Coast. In 1904 he helped organize the Union Generale dei Lavoratori, or General Workers Union, which affiliated with the American Federation of Labor as the Laborers and Excavators Union. Taking advantage of his extensive network, he helped organize ten Italian unions in the region by 1909, in each replacing the padrone system with a closed shop and a union-run employment office. These unionized workers were mainly laborers who worked on city sewers, subways, and tunnels, street cleaners and street pavers, as well as service workers such as bootblacks.¹⁵¹ Italian immigrant women were also at the forefront of new union organizing across skill-level in the garment industry during the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁵²

Some of Boston's workers in the service sector also formed unions, including African American waiters and cooks. Hotel and restaurant workers were some of the earliest service sector

¹⁵⁰ Sari Roboff, *Boston's Labor Movement: An Oral History of Work and Union Organizing* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1977), 14.

¹⁵¹ Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 208; Stephen Puleo, *The Boston Italians: A Story of Pride, Perseverance, and Paesani, from the Years of the Great Immigration to the Present Day* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).

¹⁵² These industrial unions will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 3.

occupations to unionize, and a white-only Bartenders Union was founded in Boston in 1888.¹⁵³ This union became Local 77 when it joined the AFL-affiliated Waiters and Bartenders National Union. In 1898 the national union became the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Alliance and Bartenders International League of America. Members of Boston's Local 77 played a leading role in this union, including one representative serving as president from 1902-1907. Because of the large number of African Americans in these occupations, while integrated locals were not considered, the national union encouraged the formation of separate locals of African Americans to prevent their use as strikebreakers.¹⁵⁴ Black waiters were typically paid less than their white counterparts, but took these jobs because they were the only ones available to African Americans. Most did not have steady jobs but tended to be hired for specific catering jobs or as extras.¹⁵⁵ After a white Waiters Union, Local 80, was founded in Boston, African-American members split off in 1893 to form the only African-American union in Boston, the Colored Waiters Union Local 183. These two locals were governed by a Joint Executive Board, and had an agreement not to compete with each other.¹⁵⁶ The development of Local 183 reveals the possibilities and limits of African American organizing within the white male craft union AFL structure. The President of Local 183, Forrest B. Anderson, was an African-American man born in Missouri who had migrated to Boston in 1904. While he worked as a waiter and rose to become the local president, he also attended one of the few evening law schools open to African-Americans at the time, the YMCA evening law institute, and would subsequently go on to become a lawyer and politician in Kansas.¹⁵⁷ Anderson regularly wrote in to the national union

¹⁵³ Hotel & Restaurant Employees International Alliance and Bartenders International League of America, *Fifty Years of Progress, 1890-1941* (Cincinnati, Ohio: American Federation of Labor, 1941), 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 15–18.

¹⁵⁵ John Daniels, *In Freedom's Birthplace; a Study of the Boston Negroes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 377.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ J. Clay Smith Jr, *Emancipation: The Making of the Black Lawyer, 1844-1944* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 76; L. J. Pettijohn, *Twenty-Second Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Kansas, 1919-1920* (Topeka:

journal, *Mixer and Server*, about the status of the local, including the repeated difficulties of maintaining members.¹⁵⁸ In 1906 Anderson complained that the local only had 50 members, out of a workforce of 2,000 waiters in the city, and requested additional support from organized labor in the city. The local succeeded in joining the Boston's Central Labor Union in 1907, which began hiring black waiters for their banquets and parties.¹⁵⁹ However, direct attacks from other white locals would ultimately undermine this union. In 1908, the white Local 80 filed a complaint that Local 183 had been providing a particular Boston caterer with waiters for 50 cents less than their agreed union rates. The matter was taken to the Joint Executive Board, which sustained charges against Local 183, and suspended the union.¹⁶⁰ In 1909 the national union funded a new campaign to reorganize the black waiters of Boston, and in July of that year, black waiters were reorganized as Local 226, which the journal editors boasted had set a record and would soon "outstrip any colored local in the country."¹⁶¹ However, only a few years later, in 1913 and 1916, Local 329 of Lynn filed similar complaints against Local 226: black waiters from Boston were charged with taking jobs in Lynn and undercutting the union scale.¹⁶² On July 15, 1916, the national General Executive Board sided with the white local. Because "the continuation of Local 226 could be regarded as nothing other than a

Kansas State Printing Plant, 1920), 75; "Legal Directory," *The Crisis* 46, no. 12 (December 1939): 379; J.J. Boris, ed., *Who's Who in Colored America* (New York: Who's Who in Colored America Corp, 1927), 5. See also census records for 1910 and 1940: Year: 1910; Census Place: *Boston Ward 10, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: T624_617; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 1405; FHL microfilm: 1374630; Year: 1910; Census Place: *Boston Ward 10, Suffolk, Massachusetts*; Roll: T624_617; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 1405; FHL microfilm: 1374630

¹⁵⁸ "Boston, Mass," *The Mixer and Server*, Vol. 12, No. 6, June 15, 1903, 41; "Boston, Mass," *The Mixer and Server*, Vol. 15, No. 1, January 15, 1906, 28.

¹⁵⁹ "Boston, Mass," *The Mixer and Server*, Vol 16, No. 2, Feb. 15, 1907, 38

¹⁶⁰ J. E. Laycock, "Boston, Mass. March 3, 1908," *The Mixer and Server*, Vol. 17, No. 3, March 15, 1908, 18; J. E. Laycock, "Lowell, Mass. Oct. 2, 1908," *The Mixer and Server*, Vol. 17, No. 10, October 15, 1908, 16.

¹⁶¹ *The Mixer and Server*, Vol. 18 No. 7, July 15, 1909, 44.

¹⁶² The initial grievance in 1913 was resolved in 1914, before the Lynn local filed another complaint. "Decision No. 361," *The Mixer and Server*, Vol. 22, Nov. 11, November 15, 1913, 12; Edward Flore, "Buffalo, N.Y.," Vol. 23, No. 4, April 14, 1914, 10; "Memorandum of the General executive Board," *The Mixer and Server*, Vol. 25, No. 7, July 15, 1916, 7.

menace to the existing culinary local unions,” it ordered the cancellation of Local 226. Other black waiter unions were shut down in a similar fashion across the country.¹⁶³

The susceptibility of black unions to this form of attack was likely due to conditions making it even more difficult for African Americans to find employment after the turn of the century. In particular, Canadian and Irish female employees increasingly displaced black workers.¹⁶⁴ Figure 2.16 depicts these demographic shifts. Black men and white women comprised about one third each of all wait staff in 1880, but black men declined and white women rose at almost parallel rates in the next decades. The first female waitresses union was formed in Boston in 1912, and it became Local 112 of the national Hotel and Restaurant Employees union in 1916, the same year that Boston’s black local was cancelled.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ An organizer describes the “late” colored local in Washington D.C. in 1922. “Washington D.C.,” *The Mixer and Server*, Vol. 31, No. 4, April 15, 1922, 14.

¹⁶⁴ While Irish women made up a large proportion of wait staff, Canadian women were the most heavily overrepresented through this period. By 1930, about 1/3 of waitresses were Canadian, and 1/4 were Irish. *IPUMS*, 1880-1940.

¹⁶⁵ “Trade Union Directory,” *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin No. 93*, 1912, 18; “Directory of Labor Organizations,” *Labor Bulletin No. 113*, 1916 21. A Jewish Waiter’s union was also formed in 1914. “Directory of Labor Unions,” *Labor Bulletin No. 98*, 1914, 27.

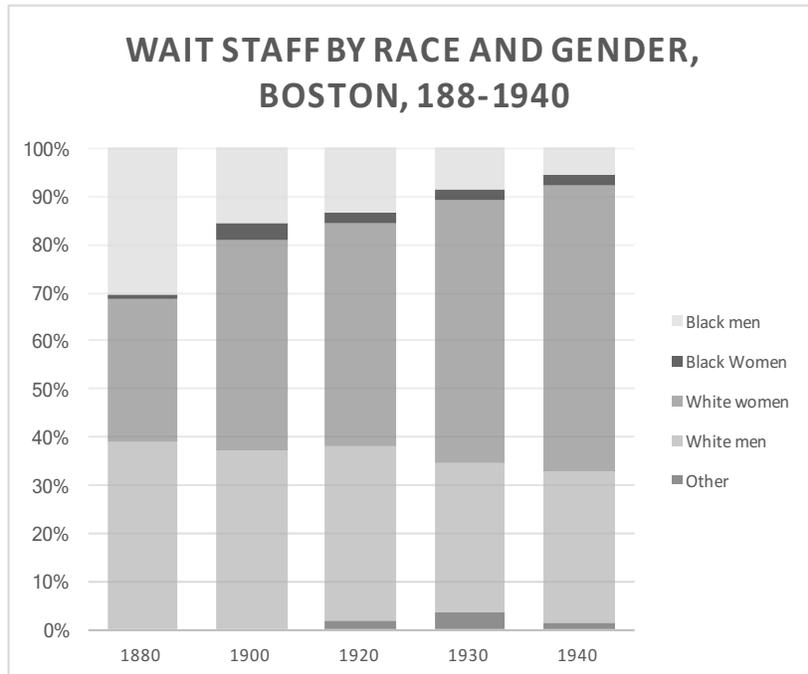


Figure 2.16

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

Intersecting racial and gender tensions within unions and in workplaces contributed to the difficulty of African American employees in this sector. There were a few black members of Boston's longshoremen union, freight handler union, coal drivers union, and teamster and teamster helpers union before WWI. However, while many union constitutions officially forbade discrimination, it was widely known that most of these unions did not accept African Americans. Forrest Anderson, president of Local 183, described the informal discrimination of blacks in a long letter to the editor and plea to organized labor to embrace African-American workers:

“The object of organized labor is to better the conditions of all persons working at the crafts morally, socially and financially [but] little effort or none has been put forward to better conditions socially, and to deal out equal privileges as regards the colored craftsmen...In our large and most intelligent cities, in the factory districts, you can hear the trade unionist declare that they would not work with a negro, but on investigation you will find him to be unprepared to give any reason for such an

assertion, other than his skin is dark...I believe the place of every laborer is in the labor union; let us all unite to protect ourselves in recognition of this one fact.”¹⁶⁶

AFL craft unions, which organized around skill-level, tended to harden racial hierarchies in the workplace, and employers regularly used racial divisions to pit workers against one another.¹⁶⁷ Only with the growth of integrated service-sector industrial unions after the Great Depression would African American representation in labor unions increase.

Despite the organization of a female waitresses union in 1912, organizing among women service workers was also extremely limited before the 1930s. A laundry workers union was formed in Boston by the turn of the century, but most of the earliest women’s unions were in the clothing industry and printing trades. Women’s settlement houses, including the WEIU, played an important role in supporting these few existing women’s craft unions. However, hostility to women members from male union members and leadership, internal ethnic divisions, and mistrust between middle-class women allies and rank and file workers stymied many of these early efforts. In addition, even the settlement houses that had initially supported incipient labor organizing shifted their focus to schooling and research by the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ F. B. Anderson, “Boston, Mass,” *The Mixer and Server* 15:7 (July 15, 1906): 22. See also Daniels, *In Freedom’s Birthplace; a Study of the Boston Negroes*, 376–77.

¹⁶⁷ Roboff and Kenneally, *The North End*; Melvyn Dubofsky and Joseph Anthony McCartin, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Puleo, *The Boston Italians*, 99–163; Robert H. Zieger, *For Jobs and Freedom: Race and Labor in America Since 1865* (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 2007); Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁶⁸ Women’s craft unions will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. While the official stance of the AFL under the leadership of Samuel Gompers was to promote female membership and “equal pay for equal work,” the decentralized and autonomous structure of craft union locals made movements in this direction slow. Many local unions passed resolutions prohibiting women from joining their unions in the 1880s and 1890s. Carolyn D. McCreesh, *Women in the Campaign to Organize Garment Workers, 1880-1917* (New York: Garland Pub, 1985), 40; See also Deutsch, *Women and the City*, 161–219; Kathleen Banks Nutter, *The Necessity of Organization: Mary Kenney O’Sullivan and Trade Unionism for Women, 1892-1912* (New York: Garland Pub, 2000).

A more direct form of intervention into the low-wage labor market was public sector employment. Throughout the nineteenth century, public employment was commonly used a means of “spoils” to reward loyal party members, as well as to provide assistance to those in need. Political patronage through public employment as laborers, police, clerks, and teachers—the majority at the municipal level—was subject to increased public scrutiny in the late nineteenth century. In 1884, just one year after the U.S. Civil Service Reform Act reformed hiring procedures for federal employees, Massachusetts established its own Civil Service Commission to reform this process for state and city workers. While “good government” and anti-corruption reformers sought to use these commissions to eliminate the spoils system along party lines, they also imagined public employment as a form of welfare provision to the most worthy applicants.

The Massachusetts Commission established new hiring practices for the “labor service” of the city of Boston, consisting of male day laborers to work on streets, sewers, drainage works, common and public grounds, lamps, parks, ferries, and cemeteries. Applicants for laborer positions were required to provide their 1) name, 2) age, 3) residence, 4) citizenship, 5) number and relationship of persons depending for support upon the applicant, 6) service in army/navy, 7) previous occupation, 8) references, 9) personal description, and “satisfactory evidence of their capacity for labor and their habits as to industry and sobriety.” When a request was made for laborers, the officer would make “an impartial selection by lot or otherwise, giving preference to veterans and those supporting families.”¹⁶⁹ Civil service reformers, like personnel managers, sought to place hiring practices on a rational and meritocratic basis, but unlike the private sector, public employment explicitly served as a means of aid to needy applicants. At the same time, the chief goal of civil service reformers was not to create a more inclusive public service workforce, but to

¹⁶⁹ James M. Bugbee and Charles Theodore Russell, Jr., *First Annual Report of the Civil Service Commissioners of Massachusetts, 1885* (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1885), 25–32.

undercut channels of political favoritism. Their criteria could also be used to exclude those who did not meet proper “habits of industry and sobriety,” those who lacked references, and non-citizens, who were excluded entirely from public service.¹⁷⁰

Civil service reforms did not eliminate channels of patronage. Robert Woods, a Boston philanthropist and author of several studies of Boston’s immigrant neighborhoods, noted in 1899 that, while subject to these civil service procedures, the control of labor appointments was still “distributed through the wards and allotted to the local politicians.”¹⁷¹ These not only included municipal laborers, but laborers for railroad corporations like Boston Elevated and the New York New Haven Railroad that held city government franchises. Woods estimated that about one third of Irish families in the West End included a breadwinner employed by the city.¹⁷² Thus, public employment could make a real difference for those who could mobilize to claim municipal power, like the Irish in Boston. The development of strong ethnic-based party divisions in Boston continued to fuel political patronage along ethnic lines, but those in the position of least political power were excluded, especially African Americans.¹⁷³

Whether through patronage or civil service procedures, city employment played an important role in the low-wage labor market. As one of the single largest employers of laborers, the city helped thousands of workers. It raised the standards of wages, offering about 25 cents more per day at the turn of the century than the private sector, as well as more job security.¹⁷⁴ Many of these jobs were also the earliest to unionize, giving workers additional security. In 1902, these included the

¹⁷⁰ Woods, *Americans in Process*, 121.

¹⁷¹ Woods, *The City Wilderness*, 88.

¹⁷² Woods, *Americans in Process*, 121.

¹⁷³ Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty: Boston 1865-1900*, 130; James J. Connolly, *The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism: Urban Political Culture in Boston, 1900-1925* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹⁷⁴ Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty: Boston 1865-1900*, 130.

Ben Franklin Assembly, comprised of city employees of the sanitary street cleaning department, the Water Department Workers Protective Union, and the Sewer Workers Union.¹⁷⁵ Municipal and government employee unions would grow dramatically in the next decades as public sector employment increased, second only in number to organized workers in the building trades and metals/machinery industry.¹⁷⁶ While the city of Boston only employed about 2% of laborers in Boston in 1900, this percentage rose to about 10% in 1910, and 20% in wake of depression in 1930.¹⁷⁷ Public employment offered critical relief to impoverished people and their families during times of economic depression and high unemployment. The city experimented with work-sharing programs whereby groups of laborers would alternate weeks of employment, and found that “this rotation of work relieved the situation and gave general satisfaction.”¹⁷⁸ The city of Boston also provided direct welfare relief during the 1930s in response to the Great Depression. John DeCosta recalls the relief provided by James Michael Curley, the four-time mayor of Boston who was notoriously elected even after cheating on a civil service exam. “They didn’t come any better than James Michael [Curley]. He had no enemies in the South End. I was on welfare during the Depression...and he was the only man in this City...who at Christmas gave the people an extra five-dollar bill in the welfare check. And that was a gold mine in those days.”¹⁷⁹ While the benefits of public employment and public welfare services was not distributed equally, and many recent immigrants and African Americans continued to be excluded, these forms of direct assistance were

¹⁷⁵ “Labor Organizations of Massachusetts,” *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin*, No. 21, February 1902, 112

¹⁷⁶ In 1908, there were 3,731 municipal employees and 1,643 federal employees in unions in Massachusetts; by 1940, municipal and state employees grew to 10,653 and federal employees to 6,655. “Labor Organizations,” *Annual Report of the Statistics of Labor 1909* (Boston, Wright & Potter, 1911), 316; Department of Labor and Industries, “Thirty-Ninth Annual Directory of Labor Organizations in Massachusetts 1940,” *Labor Bulletin* No. 182 (Boston: 1940), 90.

¹⁷⁷ *Annual Report of the Civil Service Commission of Massachusetts*, 1900, 1910, 1930; *Census of the United States, 1900, 1910, 1930*

¹⁷⁸ *Annual Report of the Civil Service Commission of Massachusetts*, 1921, 10.

¹⁷⁹ Kenneally, *The South End*, 17.

some of most helpful strategies for adult workers, and helped fill in the gap left by educational strategies.

Conclusion

The turn of the century witnessed important institutional and structural transformations of the low-wage labor market. Immigrant labor agents worked in conjunction with large employers to facilitate a transnational immigrant labor network. Professional social workers sought to regulate the worst abuses of immigrant agents and for-profit employment agencies by founding alternatives agencies. Public administrators instituted free employment agencies and civil service reforms to rationalize public employment, and offered direct welfare relief to the most needy.

But the most politically popular policy was education. An educated middle class of personnel managers, philanthropists, public administrators and school officials frequently attributed the position of low-wage workers to their lack of skill or training, and reflected common assumptions about the deficiencies of certain racial and ethnic groups. They believed education would prove an effective means of addressing poverty by improving the conditions of low-wage labor. This ideological preference for educational programming dovetailed with more practical considerations. Education was not a direct challenge to employers or the prevailing balance of power, as stricter employer regulations, protections for collective bargaining rights, or universal welfare provision would have been. And unlike public welfare relief or public employment that specifically aided the most impoverished, public education was a service that catered to and drew substantial political support from a broad middle class. The public school system – as the single largest expense of municipalities through this period – offered the best vehicle for the expansion of the welfare state.

The array of new educational services came to reflect a mediated negotiation of both middle-class architects and low-wage attendees' interests. While some educational services, such as schools of housekeeping, were failures and soon closed, other services were much more popular. Adult immigrants attended evening schools to learn the English language; immigrant mothers attended the Day School for Immigrants, and likely appreciated the afternoons of free day care. Young workers who attended continuation classes, elementary, and increasingly high schools learned the technical knowledge and cultural behaviors that employers preferred, all of which could prove advantageous in the workplace. Immigrant and African American workers and their families thus sought out and took advantage of select resources, shaping their provision in subsequent years.

Education thus proved to be a domain in which cross-class coalitions could be forged. Despite all the rhetoric that justified the expansion of formal schooling, however, neither private nor public educational services succeeded in significantly impacting the low-wage labor market. Through the 1930s, the sector of low-wage labor remained one of the largest sectors of employment for men and women, and it continued to be structured by gender, ethnic, and racial divisions. The majority of low-wage workers were hired in the same way as they had been in 1880—through informal channels and subject to the whims and prejudices of their employers.

Instead of stronger employment or social protections through state regulation, collective bargaining, public employment, or public welfare provision, strategies for reforming education largely accommodated the private sector, placing the burden of social advancement on individual workers. Education as a labor policy reflected the political balance of power tipped toward a new group of middle-class professionals, who, while willing to alleviate the most acute forms of labor exploitation, did not challenge its structural features. Despite some instances of low-wage workers organizing collectively and exerting political power, they were not able sustain this power to promote alternative forms of intervention in the labor market. Low-wage work continued to be a

sector for adult immigrants and African Americans, while young people, if they could, sought access to other sectors of employment. The success of those who were able to use schools as a means of social mobility helped solidify education and training as the preferred means of addressing labor problems, and, as we will see in chapters three through five, established the dominance of school-based credentials across the employment structure.

Chapter 3

Learning A Trade: The Politics of Industrial Training

While nearly every shop owner recognizes the need of more apprentices in training to become skilled machinists, not all of them are willing to take boys into their establishments and devote a reasonable amount of time and effort to teaching them the trade...[In addition,] many [ambitious youths] shrink from it as 'such a greasy, dirty trade.'... Free instruction is afforded to children in the public schools of most States, and why should not some public provision be made for promoting shop instruction? When private means fail to meet the great and growing industrial demand for more skilled workmen, the proper time for government action seems to have arrived.

- Editors of the *American Machinist*, April 30, 1881¹

Introduction

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, a growing number of constituencies saw industrial education as a solution to the “apprentice problem.” This movement, chiefly focused on training for men, continued to gain strength in the context of the rapid industrial transformation of the second industrial revolution. In the late nineteenth century, most artisans still found employment through immediate kinship or social ties, and began a formal or informal apprenticeship at the age of 13 or 14 after receiving a common school education. As workshops grew larger, and employers had little incentive to invest in lengthy training and coordinate apprenticeships with labor unions, many turned to alternative strategies to renew the status of manual occupations, provide quality training, and offer their children lucrative employment opportunities. In particular, many believed that this was a problem that schools were uniquely suited to address. Starting in the late nineteenth century

¹ “Why Apprentices are Scarce,” *American Machinist*, April 23, 1881, 8.

and reaching a fever pitch in the first decades of the twentieth, “industrial education” was touted as a necessary substitute for apprenticeship in the face of rapid industrialization.² Employers and educators alike criticized the public schools, which educated the overwhelming majority of Boston youths, for failing to provide practical education that benefited all students equally.³ Some philanthropists advocated industrial education as a form of social and cultural uplift for poor immigrants, based on the honest virtues of hard work and thrift. A newer wave of progressive social reformers and educators believed that education would play an essential role in shaping the emerging industrial order. Even labor unions would come to endorse public industrial education as a means of promoting their trades.

Despite the enormity of public discussion devoted to industrial education, it was largely a failure. While Boston and the state of Massachusetts led early efforts for both training and regulation of the certification of trade skills, conflict at the local and state level would prevent the development of a coordinated industrial training regime in the United States. Local male craft unions in cities across the country including Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco opposed the provision of specific trade training, control over which was an important feature of their power in the workplace.⁴ They fiercely opposed private trade schools, which were often sponsored by employer associations or wealthy philanthropists with ties to industry. The most promising prospect for a mutually-beneficial

² “Young Men’s Christian Union Lecture on Industrial Education,” *Boston Herald*, February 6, 1881, 10; “The Educator’s Council,” *Boston Herald*, July 14, 1882; “Industrial Education,” *Boston Herald*, April 15, 1883, 12; “Industrial Education,” *Boston Herald*, January 4, 1884, 2; “Heads Industrial Education Board,” *Boston Herald*, August 31, 1906, 7; “Contests for Offices,” *Boston Herald*, March 9, 1909, 4; “Praise Abrahams at Faneuil Hall Rally,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec 17, 1916, 16.

³ Private and parochial schools enrolled about 10% of school-goers in Boston in 1880, and 18% by 1920. *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1880*, Table II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882); *Biennial Survey of Education, 1918-1920, Statistics* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1923), 126.

⁴ For union opposition to private trade schools and accommodation with public schools in Chicago and San Francisco, see Ira Katznelson, *Schooling for All: Class, Race, and the Decline of the Democratic Ideal* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 150–77. The AFL published a thorough investigation of trade schools across the country, which provides an overview of their criticisms and recommendations for appropriate forms of technical education in the U.S. Charles Henry Winslow, *Industrial Education: Report of Committee on Industrial Education of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1912).

training arrangement was through the public schools, through which craft unions had some political power to shape programs with union-friendly restrictions. However, even these new public enterprises faced low enrollment and were extremely expensive to maintain. Also, union restrictions pushed these schools away from specific trade training and towards rudimentary training or theoretical science and mathematics. Employers, who continued to face limited access to trained male artisans and craft union hostility, were encouraged to pursue rationalization strategies that shifted their need away from craft workers, replacing them with new types of workers: machine operatives who could learn in short training periods on the job, school-trained white-collar staff, and a smaller number of university-educated engineers. In other words, employers successfully undercut the power of craft union control in a “race to the bottom” of industrial training by employing a different composition of workers that received the bulk of their training in general high schools, colleges, and universities.

Reformers at the time, and to this day, point to systems of regulated apprenticeship in Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavia as models for what an American industrial training regime might look like.⁵ However, reform projects then and now often focus on developing educational curricula and schools without addressing the problem of employer coordination and regulation. As scholars of skill formation regimes such as Kathleen Thelen have argued, national training regimes evolved within very different political economies, and political settlements during early industrialization in the nineteenth century fundamentally shaped and constrained future possibilities. In “coordinated” market economies like Germany and Japan, a cross-class alliance between

⁵ For example: Nancy Hoffman and Robert Schwartz, “Gold Standard: The Swiss Vocational Education and Training System” (Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy, 2015); Nancy Hoffman, *Schooling in the Workplace: How Six of the World’s Best Vocational Education Systems Prepare Young People for Jobs and Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2011).; Harold Sirkin, “What Germany Can Teach The U.S. About Vocational Education,” *Bloomberg*, April 29, 2013.

employers and unions enabled a state-regulated vocational training system.⁶ This mutually beneficial training system encouraged employers to increase small-batch production industries that relied on a higher proportion of trained artisans. In “liberal” market economies such as the UK and U.S., control of skill formation was contested across classes by employers and unions, hindering the regulation of industrial training. Lacking this infrastructure, employers shifted instead toward larger economies of scale that depended upon a higher proportion of machine operatives and drew on academic schools for personnel for their large bureaucracies.⁷

While previous studies of training regimes have created typologies of national trends from a bird-eye view, few have delved deeply into the historical record to reconstruct this process at a local level. Scholars of American industrial education often focus on national-level legislation such as the 1917 Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act, but, during this time, federal legislation and funding for education was marginal compared to what was happening at the state and local level.⁸ In addition, significant variation existed across states and cities within the United States. Boston offers a particularly useful site of analysis because, compared to other U.S. localities, it was one of the most likely sites for the development of an industrial training regime. Boston had a high proportion of small-batch production firms that relied on artisans with lengthy periods of training and was one of the earliest cities to develop industrial training schools and technical institutes. The contested process through which an industrial training regime ultimately failed in this city highlights the

⁶ Kathleen Thelen’s grouping of national economies follows Hall and Soskice’s “Varieties of Capitalism” distinction between “liberal” and “coordinated” economies. Kathleen Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20–23.

⁷ Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve*; Hal Hansen, “Caps and Gowns: Historical Reflections on the Institutions That Shaped Learning For and At Work, 1800-1945” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1997).

⁸ Studies of industrial education in the U.S. focus on the balance of power between industrial interests in the North and agricultural interests in the South, the two-party system, and the power of academic educators that prevented the coordination of industrial training at the federal level. While I agree with these assessments of the federal politics of vocational education, the municipal level is the relevant scale on which to analyze this process. Cathie Jo Martin, “Political Institutions and the Origins of Collective Skill Formation Systems,” in *The Political Economy of Collective Skill Formation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

relevant obstacles. In particular, the role of public high schools as an alternative path into white-collar employment has been overlooked in previous comparative studies, but is one of the most important factors in Boston, and likely one of most important differences between American and European training regimes.⁹

By 1940, only in the building trades did craft union-regulated apprenticeship continue as the dominant form of training certification in Boston. Most other employees in industry did not have occupation-specific training, but required general literacy and numeracy and cultural knowledge of the kind learned in public school. Machine operatives were recruited from second-generation immigrants, who had a primary school education and one or two years of high school. White-collar staff were predominantly women with a high school education. A small number of engineers received advanced scientific training in predominantly private colleges and universities.

The transformation of industry, and of pathways into the industrial workforce, had a significant impact on the gender, racial, and ethnic structure of social inequality. On the one hand, these new pathways opened up some doors to diverse populations. While craft unions had been the limited realm of a skilled, white, male aristocracy of labor, women and immigrant workers increasingly filled industrial occupations in large factories. At the same time, the decline of craft unions allowed employers to control the training process. Employers came to rely on schools from which they selected their preferred employees. This reliance reproduced longstanding gender, racial, and class-based hierarchies, now under an ideology of merit. While new workers were more educated than ever, there was no guarantee that this education would pay off in the workplace. Certain populations, especially African Americans, continued to be excluded from most forms of employment.

⁹ The vast expansion of white-collar employees who received their training in public high schools is the subject of Chapter Four.

In this chapter, I will first sketch the overall economic and demographic transformation of three major types of trades in Boston between 1880 and 1940. Boston had long been home to a diversified economy with a wide variety of trades and light manufacturing. The three largest trades also typified the range of disparate outcomes that occurred in this sector: the clothing trades, the metal trades, and the building trades. I will then turn to organization of the industrial labor market, and show how the training for a “skilled” workforce became the driving force of conflict between craft unions and employers. In response, industrial trade education rose in popularity as a potential method of training workers. While private and public industrial trade schools emerged, they encountered opposition from craft unions and low student demand. These adverse results encouraged employers to pursue strategies of rationalization and anti-unionism that decreased their reliance on artisans, and instead drew on greater number of machine operatives, white-collar staff, and engineers. Schools reshaped their curricular offerings. Public schools expanded general education for the growing number of machine operatives while private schools repurposed themselves to offer higher-level scientific training for engineers and supervisors. By the Great Depression, the comprehensive high school was consolidated as the dominant training institution for the vast majority of industrial workers, and private elite colleges and universities trained an engineering and managerial elite. Within the workplace, as craft-union power was undercut in almost all sectors, the balance of power shifted away from workers and toward employers.

The separation of training from work undercut forms of craft-union power, but this was not the only basis of worker power. Among alternative strategies were early efforts to organize industrial unions, which were not based on control of the training process, but based on solidarity across skill levels. Industrial unions emerged first in the early twentieth century in the garment industry, among state employees, and subsequently in large manufacturing firms. Industrial unions won important workplace gains before WWI and came to prominence in Boston and nation-wide after the Great

Depression. However, these gains mitigated, rather than reverse, the effects of the elaboration of a credentialed hierarchy. The triumph of school-based learning by 1930, and the ideological consolidation of education as a means of social mobility, was a powerful countervailing force against modes of solidarity-based unionism through the mid-twentieth century. As these union gains were eroded in the late twentieth century, the credential-based hierarchy that had been forged decades earlier would increasingly structure social inequality.

Overview

The employment structure of Boston experienced significant changes from 1880 to 1940. On some fronts there was relative stability. The percentage of men and women who worked in the paid labor force remained fairly stable, at about 80% of men and 30% of women.¹⁰ Figure 3.1 and 3.2 show the changing sectoral composition of men's and women's paid work in Boston during this period. From these charts, one can observe that for men, artisans remained the largest percentage of the male workforce through 1920, and declined from 1920-1940. Female artisans represented a smaller but still substantial fraction of wage-earning women in 1880, but fell steeply in subsequent decades.

¹⁰ The percentage of women who worked in the paid labor force grew from 27% in 1880 to a peak of 34% in 1910, and then down to 30% in 1940. For men, the percentage remained fairly stable at 82% until dipping to 77% in 1930 and only 69% in 1940, reflecting the long term effects of the Great Depression. *IPUMS 1880-1940*.

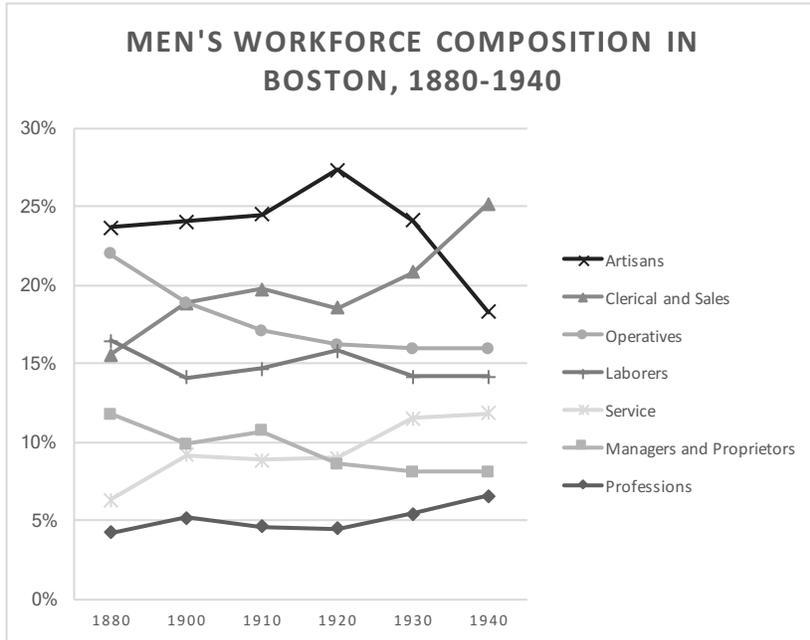


Figure 3.1

Sources: IPUMS 1880 100%, 1900 5%, 1910 1%, 1920 100%, 1930 100%, 1940 100%.

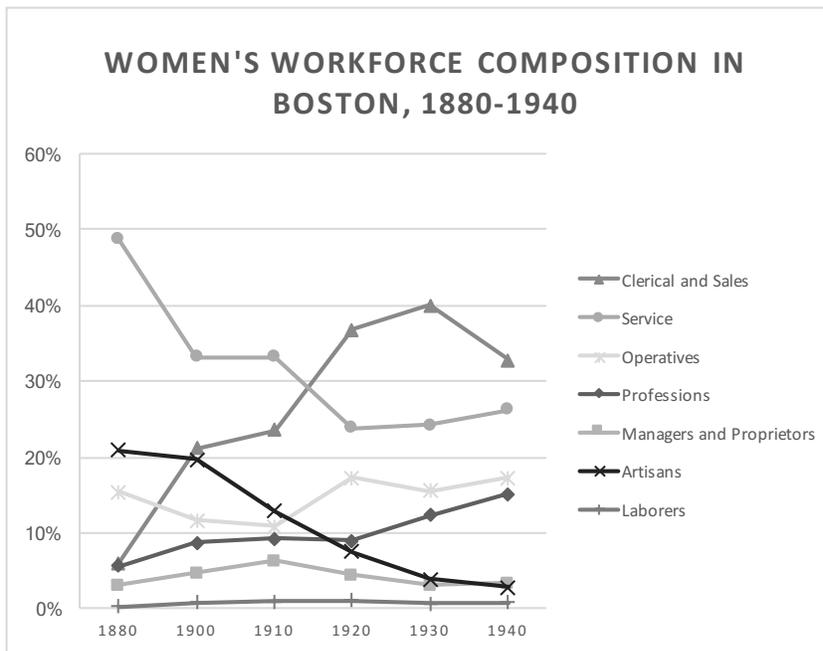


Figure 3.2

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

These broad trends are helpful as an outline but mask the greater transformation of the nature of work in the trades during this period. A large body of scholarship in labor history focuses on the process of “deskilling.”¹¹ Mechanization and rationalization strategies did render many traditional craft skills obsolete, and replaced many low-wage manual laborers with machines. The female dressmaking and millinery trades are good examples of this process. Custom dressmakers and milliners were the female aristocracy of labor, predominantly white native-born and Canadian women, who made high-quality, expensive goods in small shops or in their own homes for wealthy women customers. While a few unions like the Women’s Hat Trimmers Union (1886) emerged in Boston, this sector was generally unorganized, as male craft unions were unreceptive to women’s organizing. In the next decades, these trades were almost completely replaced by large ready-made garment factories in which female tailors and sewing machine operatives learned quickly on the job and were overseen by male management.¹² Whereas women factory workers had been principally

¹¹ Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); David Montgomery 1927-, *Workers’ Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Tom Juravich, *At the Altar of the Bottom Line: The Degradation of Work in the 21st Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009).

¹² The first items of women’s clothing to be factory-produced were cloaks, petticoats, and shirtwaists (blouses) in the late nineteenth century, then dresses by the first decade of the twentieth. Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 216. Wendy Gamber, “A Precarious Independence: Milliners and Dressmakers in Boston, 1860-1890,” *Journal of Women’s History* 4, no. 1 (1992): 60–88.

Irish in the late nineteenth century, in the next decades they were replaced by Russian Jewish and Italian women, as depicted in Figure 3.3.¹³ One daughter of Italian immigrants, Rose Giampoala worked in a factory for “five and a half days, nine hours a day, five hours on Saturday,” where she remembered her foremen as “slave drivers.”¹⁴ Many of these new immigrants brought more radical political traditions with them and led new waves of industrial unionization in the first decades of the

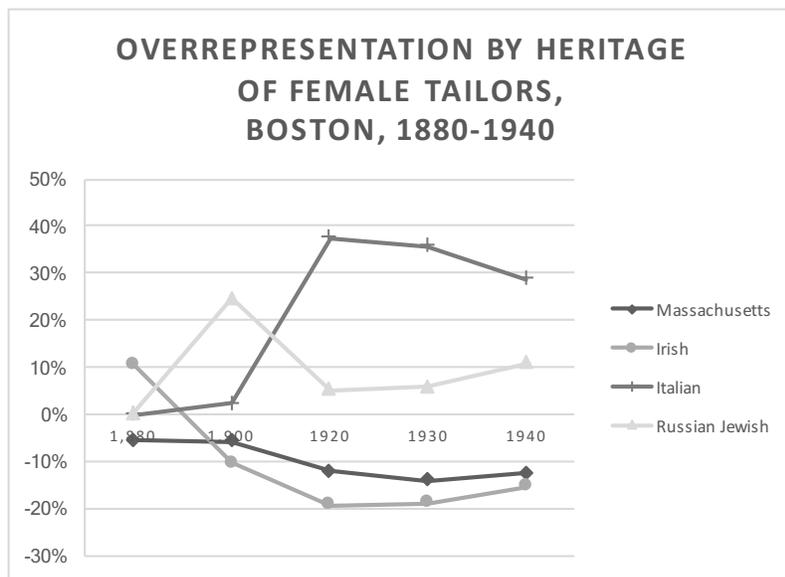


Figure 3.3

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

twentieth century with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union (ACWU).¹⁵ By 1940, while the majority of workers in the garment industry belonged to unions, the handicraft skills and process of apprenticeship in the dressmaking and millinery trades

¹³ Tailors are representative of the demographic trends of the garment industry, which replaced non-factory dressmaking. The accompanying table reflected changes in the population of tailors, including factory workers, and is the best census classification approximation to garment industry workers. Among non-factory dressmakers, milliners, and seamstresses, the representation of Italian women also grew rapidly after 1920. “Overrepresentation” of a specific heritage group is calculated by subtracting the overall percentage of the Boston (male or female) workforce that belongs to that group, from their percentage in the specific occupation. For example, if Scandinavian males made up 5% of the Boston male workforce, but 10% of Boston male machinists, they would be “overrepresented” by 5%. Heritage is based on whether or not that individual had either a mother or father from a foreign country. For the Massachusetts category, heritage would mean that both parents are from that location. If a child had an Irish father and Massachusetts-born mother, that individual’s “heritage” would be Irish, for the purposes of this study. In addition, because “heritage” can only be measured back one generation, based on the census listing for mother and father’s place of birth, this metric only captures 2nd generation immigrants, not 3rd or 4th generation immigrants. Therefore, the number of those with Irish, Italian, Russian Jewish heritage is likely higher than this data suggests.

¹⁴ Sari Roboff and Katie Kenneally, *The North End* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1975), 23–25.

¹⁵ Kathleen Banks Nutter, *The Necessity of Organization: Mary Kenney O’Sullivan and Trade Unionism for Women, 1892-1912* (Taylor & Francis, 2000); Carolyn D. McCreech, *Women in the Campaign to Organize Garment Workers, 1880-1917* (New York: Garland Pub, 1985).

had almost disappeared.

While the number of women artisans declined in this period, across all trades and manufacturing in the U.S. the number of highly-trained artisans in fact rose. The metal trades, at the heart of industrial transformation in the U.S., are a good illustration of this process.¹⁶ As firms grew larger, the relative proportion of craftsmen decreased, but their overall number increased. “All-around” machinists and mechanics were still required in the metal trades to help guide production and troubleshoot and repair machines. Additionally, for custom orders or small-batch production of specialized machinery, large companies did not necessarily have an advantage over small ones.¹⁷ Boston was home to many small-batch production machine shops and foundries that required the labor of machinists, patternmakers, and tool and die makers.¹⁸ Over the next decades in Boston, however, machinists and mechanics did decline as a proportion of the male workforce. Craft unions were weak in the face of an aggressive open-shop drive led by employers and employers associations such as the National Metal Trades Association (NMTA) both before and after WWI. The demographic composition of this industry also shifted. Figure 3.4 depicts “overrepresentation” by heritage for machinists from 1880-1940. Through the 1940s, English and Scandinavian machinists were significantly overrepresented. Over time, however, Irish Bostonians increasingly entered this trade, and by the 1930s, women entered the metal industry as electrical, radio, and machine operatives. These new employees would be at the forefront of a new wave of industrial unions across skill-level after the Great Depression.

¹⁶ Chris McGuffie, *Working in Metal: Management and Labour in the Metal Industries of Europe and the USA, 1890-1914* (London: Merlin Press, 1985); Howell John Harris, *Bloodless Victories: The Rise and Fall of the Open Shop in the Philadelphia Metal Trades, 1890-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Hansen, “Caps and Gowns”; Irving Lewis Horowitz, “The Metal Machining Trades in Philadelphia; an Occupational Survey” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1939); Monte A. Calvert, *The Mechanical Engineer in America, 1830-1910: Professional Cultures in Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967).

¹⁷ Joshua L. Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work, Searching for Workers: American Labor Markets During Industrialization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 80–113.

¹⁸ James H. Soltow, “Origins of Small Business Metal Fabricators and Machinery Makers in New England, 1890-1957,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 55, no. 10 (1965): 1–58.

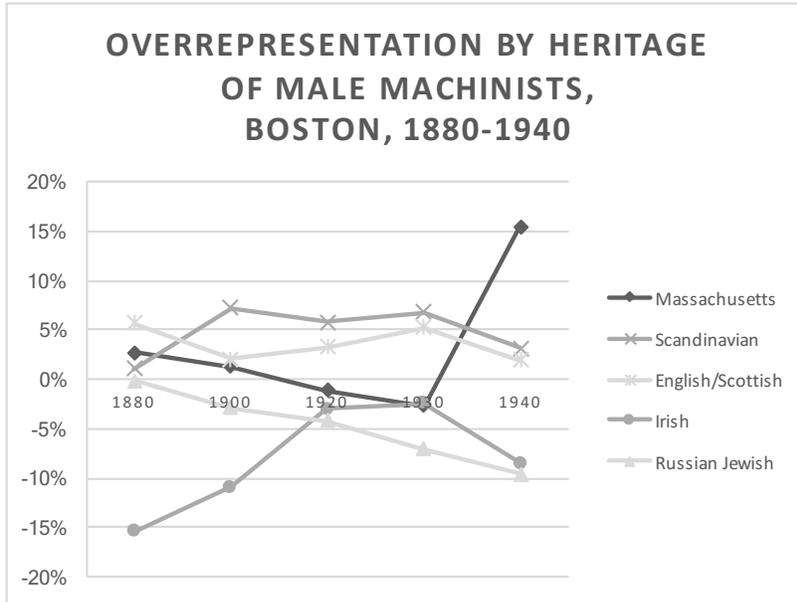


Figure 3.4

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

The building trades, by contrast, retained strong craft unions and regulated apprenticeship as the path to entry. The strength of building trade unions grew from the localized and decentralized nature of construction that made mass-production strategies untenable, and allowed unions to play an indispensable role as a labor bureau.¹⁹ While materials and technologies of construction changed dramatically during this period, construction projects themselves were highly specific and local, and work was seasonal and highly weather-dependent. Carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers, plumbers, and electricians moved rapidly from one project to the next, and construction required elaborate coordination. At any given time on a project, multiple tradesmen might work side by side, which became a strong source of union power: union tradesmen threatened to strike if non-union workers

¹⁹ Mark Erlich, *With Our Hands: The Story of Carpenters in Massachusetts* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Robert A. Christie, *Empire in Wood: A History of the Carpenters' Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956); Michael Kazin, *Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Grace Palladino, *Skilled Hands, Strong Spirits: A Century of Building Trades History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

showed up to the worksite.²⁰ Contractors for construction projects worked directly with union business agents for the tradesmen that they needed, which gave unions leverage over employers. When contractors entered politics, these relationships became the basis of political machines, which was another major source of union strength for Irish Bostonians. Irish political power and trade union power rose together from 1880 to 1930, as Irish Bostonians came to dominate the Democratic Party and Democratic politicians strove to get more union jobs for their constituents, especially in construction.²¹ Building trades craftsmen also secured state licensing laws beginning in the 1880s, regulating the requirements for engaging in construction projects, plumbing, and electrical installation.²² Despite a fierce open-shop drive, building trade unions remained strong, such that even in 1921, one open-shop supporter claimed: “The building trades of Boston are to all intents and purposes 100% unionized. I mean by that that...it would be a practical impossibility to build any large building today—without employing union men.”²³ The building trades constantly revised and expanded apprenticeship training as technological change created new occupations, such as electricians. For building trades union members, the strong sense of identity, loyalty, and pride in

²⁰ William Thomas Ham, “Employment Relations in the Construction Industry of Boston.” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1926), 179–200; Gleason Leonard Archer, *The Impossible Task: The Story of Present Day Boston* (Boston: Suffolk Law School Press, 1926), 99–200.

²¹ This relationship was already in place in 1893 when Josiah Quincy, a Yankee Democrat, was elected mayor. Quincy launched an ambitious program of municipal socialism in the wake of the 1893 depression, including large public works projects that employed exclusively union workers, and a union-labor-operated municipal printing shop. James Curley, Irish Democrat elected to Boston’s Common Council in 1898 and elected mayor four times between 1914 and 1946, best exemplifies this continued cooperation. Sari Roboff, *Boston’s Labor Movement: An Oral History of Work and Union Organizing* (Boston: The Boston 200 Corporation, 1977), 15–19.

²² In 1885 Massachusetts created the position of an inspector of buildings who issued permits for any building work. In the 1890s, the state created boards of examiners for plumbers and gas fitters. In 1907, a new Building Department and Building Commissioner replaced the former Inspector of Buildings, responsible for approving all new building projects. A board of examiners, issuing licenses to electricians, was passed in 1915. *An Act Relating To The Inspection And Construction Of Buildings In The City Of Boston*, 1885 Mass. Acts Chap. 0374; *An Act Relative To The Licensing Of Plumbers And The Supervision Of The Business Of Plumbing*, 1893 Mass. Acts Chap. 0477; *An Act Relative To The Licensing Of Gas Fitters And To The Supervision Of The Business Of Gas Fitting In The City Of Boston*, 1897 Mass. Acts Chap. 0265; *An Act Relative To The Construction, Alteration And Maintenance Of Buildings In The City Of Boston*, 1907 Mass. Acts Chap. 0550; *An Act Relative To The Registration Of Persons, Firms And Corporations Designing To Install Wires Or Apparatus For Electric Light, Heat Or Power Purposes*, 1915 Mass Acts Chap. 0296.

²³ Ham, “Employment Relations in the Construction Industry of Boston,,” 183.

their craft was a source of power, but was premised on exclusion.²⁴ Across the country, the building trades had strong kinship-based paths of entry. A St. Louis contractor claimed in 1928: “a boy has as good a chance to get into West Point as into the building trades unless his father or his uncle is a building craftsman.”²⁵ In 1880s Boston, building tradesmen were disproportionately white Canadians, shown in Figure 3.5, and through the 1940s, Eastern and Southern Europeans, African Americans, and women were almost entirely excluded.²⁶ After the Great Depression, the building trades union political dominance declined and their exclusionary policies were challenged by rising industrial unions, but training on a traditional apprenticeship model persisted.

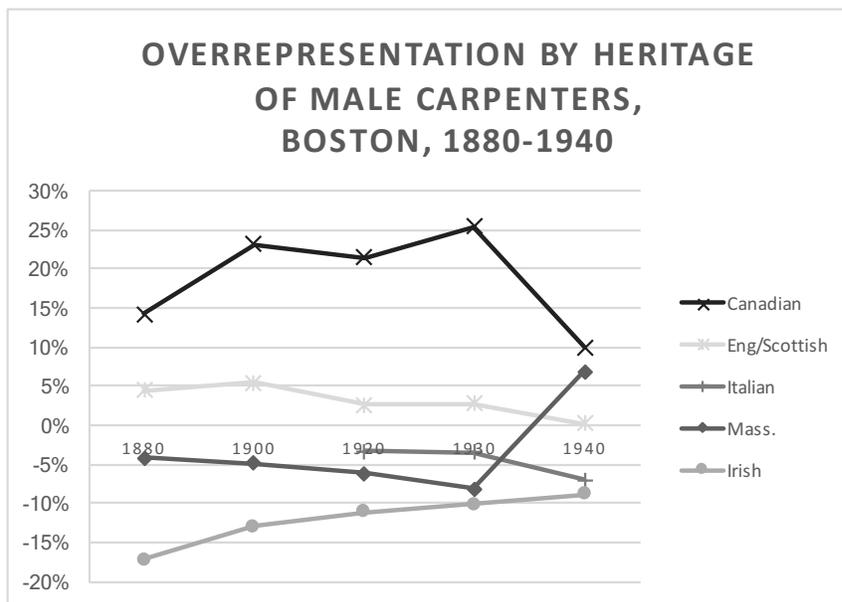


Figure 3.5

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

²⁴ Christie, *Empire in Wood*, 3–13.

²⁵ Walter Gellhorn, *Individual Freedom and Governmental Restraints* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 199.

²⁶ Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics, “Labor Organizations,” *Annual Report of the Statistics of Labor*, (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1908 -1920); in 1921 this series becomes the Department of Labor and Industries, “Directory of Labor Organizations in Massachusetts,” *Annual Report on Statistics of Labor* (Boston, 1921-1945); IPUMS 1880-1940. On exclusion along racial lines due to licensing laws, see Dan Jacoby, “Plumbing the Origins of American Vocationalism,” *Labor History* 37, no. 2 (March 1, 1996): 270–72; Herbert Roof Northrup, *Organized Labor and the Negro* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 24.

The variation in these industries reveals the factors at work in shaping training. In industries where craft unions could maintain their control of the training process, such as the building trades, trade schools were restricted. Where they could not, such as in the clothing trades, trade schools thrived; however, custom dressmaking and millinery were virtually eliminated as trades with the rise of the garment industry. The metal industry offers an intermediate example. Its craft unions resisted trade schools, and small batch production companies continued with an apprenticeship model to train “all-around” mechanics and machinists. By pursuing mass production strategies, however, companies reduced the proportion of apprenticeship-trained artisans in relation to primary-school-educated machine operatives and college-educated engineers. The sector as a whole, thus, shifted toward a labor force that was trained in general public high schools or collegiate engineering institutes. In sum, only in the building trades were employers willing to compromise with craft unions to establish a coordinated apprenticeship process. In the other industries, employers pursued mass production strategies that shifted their labor needs, allowing them to rely on general education in schools for training the majority of new employees.

The Problem of “Skill”

Apprenticeship, both formal and informal, comprised training for the trades in the late nineteenth century. Formal apprenticeship was regulated by craft unions through legal regulation in formal indentures, or union contracts. Unions set strong upper limits to the number of apprentices per journeymen in workshops to ensure that a large number of apprentices would not overcrowd the market and reduce wages. They specified pay and working hours to prevent young apprentices from being used as cheap labor, or substitutes for journeymen. They also specified the number of years of training apprentices were to receive to ensure that only high quality workmen entered the trade.

In practice, however, apprenticeship was often unregulated.²⁷ “Apprenticeship” was often used colloquially to refer to young workers or helpers. In the unorganized millinery trade, for example, the number of “apprentices” matched the degree of low-wage labor available.²⁸ Apprentices were often tasked with menial errands around the shop, and their learning happened incidentally. In small shops with only a few journeymen and downtime or seasonal fluctuations that allowed workmen to instruct apprentices, this system was effective and profitable for masters. It also served as a period of the socialization of youth into adulthood.

Employers’ training was not limited to ensuring the technical skill of their workers. Employers were also concerned with the right behavioral and ideological traits. Initiation into “shop culture” of young apprentices, and the hazing rituals that went along with it, were essential to craft identity.²⁹ These rituals were highly racialized and gendered: in the metal and building trades in particular, craftsmen performed a white masculinity that excluded non-western European immigrants and women. In larger factories with a growing differentiation of positions, employers grew concerned with how to ensure loyalty to the firm and how to root out oppositional sentiment and “agitators” that sought to form labor unions. It had long been practice to groom apprentices to become foremen and supervisors. As the owner of a large Providence machinery company, Browne & Sharpe, stated in 1906: “From the ranks of our apprentices have been selected...those who have taken the most important parts of management of our shop.”³⁰ The preferred traits for “promotable material” also typically reflected racial and ethnic stereotypes. As foreign workers from England,

²⁷ Hansen, “Caps and Gowns,” 56–64; Paul Howard Douglas, *American Apprenticeship and Industrial Education* (New York: Columbia University, 1921), 27–43, 60.

²⁸ In larger wholesale millinery factories in 1916 where highly experienced workers were most useful, there was only one apprentice to every twelve full employees. In small retail millinery shops, with many errands to run in the day-to-day operation of the store, there was one “apprentice” for every three full employees. Lorinda Perry, *The Millinery Trade in Boston and Philadelphia: A Study of Women in Industry* (Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Co., 1916), 105–15.

²⁹ Erlich, *With Our Hands*, 4; Hansen, “Caps and Gowns,” 234–38.

³⁰ L.D. Burlingame, “The Importance of an Apprentice System” *The Open Shop* 5,1 (January, 1906) 16-21.

Germany, or Scandinavia came to replace native-born American boys in the trades, employers concern with the “apprenticeship problem” and enthusiastic support for industrial education stemmed in part from their desire to attract more white native-born youth.³¹

Industrial changes by the turn of the century—increasing mechanization, division of labor, and larger factories—made even the informal apprenticeship model of training more difficult and costly. A differentiated employment structure meant that if young apprentices were employed to carry out menial or routine tasks, they might never get a chance to learn the whole trade. In addition, a streamlined labor process eliminated downtime and seasonal fluctuations. Any extra time taken for specific training purposes was unproductive.³² These difficulties encouraged apprentices to break their contracts and “steal a trade” by moving from one shop to another to acquire a wider range of skills. The runaway apprentice problem had existed since the eighteenth century, and nineteenth century unions tried to include contract provisions to prevent it, but they were often unenforceable in practice. By the first decade of the twentieth century, labor turnover was a central problem discussed in the pages of all major trade journals. Some of this turnover was caused by the same grievances that compelled workers to unionize. The period between 1897 and 1904 was a period of tremendous union expansion nation-wide: union membership grew from 440,000 to over 2 million, and in Boston, 65% of union locals in 1909 were founded after 1900.³³ Firms lost valuable time and resources during strikes, unsatisfied workers did not work at their most productive levels, and high labor turnover meant loss of investment in training costs and high costs of training their replacements.

³¹ “Labor Policies of Denison Manufacturing Co, 1876-1897” Box 7, Denison Manufacturing Company Records, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA.

³² Hansen, “Caps and Gowns,” 259–66, 277–87.

³³ “Table Ba4783-4791 : Union membership: 1880-1999” *Historical Statistics of the United States Millennial Edition Online* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Roboff, *Boston’s Labor Movement*, 19.

Between 1880 and WWI, companies adopted a range of strategies to reduce their training costs and attract and keep the skilled and loyal workers they sought. One was to recruit already-experienced workers from England, German, and Scandinavia, and artisan wages were higher in the U.S. than in Europe, even in non-union shops. Out of the 368 employees of the American Tool & Machine Company in 1919, for example, 47% were foreign.³⁴ However, artisans did not emigrate in as large numbers as low-wage workers, and some employers preferred native-born workers. As wages remained high, employers pursued other strategies.³⁵

In the first decade of the twentieth century, “industrial betterment” and “welfare work” were buzzwords in the circles of employers associations and chambers of commerce as strategies to reduce these costs and maintain their investments. The Boston Chamber of Commerce held a dinner in 1911 to which they invited executives from across the nation to discuss welfare strategies that their member firms had adopted, including mutual aid associations, profit-sharing schemes, company nurses and medical care, housing, picnics, lunchrooms, vacation plans, suggestion boxes, lectures, and English language learning for immigrants.³⁶ Speaking of his company’s profit-sharing scheme, one businessman assured the lunch gathering that these strategies were profitable: “we have a very decided feeling that the business does get back fully for every cent that it pays...through the efficiency of the employees and in their development.”³⁷ These programs helped ensure interest and

³⁴ 1919, Case 5, Folder “Immigrants Distribution,” Boston Chamber of Commerce Records, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA

³⁵ Rosenbloom, *Looking for Work, Searching for Workers*, 92–95.

³⁶ “Industrial Relations: Welfare Work New England, 1913,” Carton 48, p. 15, Boston Chamber of Commerce Records, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA. Sanford M. Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in American Industry, 1900 - 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Nikki Mandell, *The Corporation as Family: The Gendering of Corporate Welfare, 1890-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

³⁷ “Industrial Relations Welfare Work, 1907-1917” Carton 48, p. 24, Boston Chamber of Commerce Records, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA.

loyalty among workers, helped socialize and assimilate immigrant workers, and paid for themselves in the form of increased productivity and reduced labor turnover.

For the largest employers, the coordination of welfare work and the improvement of labor relations became one of the functions of new personnel departments. Personnel managers sought to rationalize the hiring, training, firing, transfer, promotion, and coordination of employees, previously left to the foreman's discretion under the "drive" system. These departments typically kept records of applicants on file, and in addition to basic information such employment history and performance evaluations, might also indicate union affiliation and personal characteristics such as "general appearance," "mentality," physical traits, and "race characteristics." These innovations boomed after 1915: that year, less than 5% of firms over 250 employees had personnel departments, while in 1929 over a third did.³⁸ In the Boston area, the Manufacturers' Research Association of Massachusetts was founded in 1920 for the purpose of "pooling of business information and experience to the end that excellence in the science of management achieved by one member can accrue to the good of the group...[and] progress may be more rapid and more widespread and yet less costly."³⁹ Over a dozen of the largest Boston-area manufacturing firms were represented.⁴⁰ Workers tended to support a more fair and rational hiring and promotion process; however, personnel departments also enhanced the ability of employers to carefully select employees according to their own interests and prejudices. As the personnel manager of Dennison Manufacturing Company, John A. Garvey, justified their promotional scheme: "I really believe that, by selecting a better class of people to begin on the low-

³⁸ Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy*, 173.

³⁹ Constitution of the Massachusetts Research Association, December 29, 1923, Carton 1, Manufacturers' Research Association, Records, 1922-1932, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

⁴⁰ Including Brown & Sharpe Manufacturing Company (milling and grinding machines), Dennison Manufacturing Company (paper products), Ginn & Company (school books), Graton & Knight Company (leather products), Nashua Manufacturing Company (blankets and flannels), Walworth Manufacturing Company (pipe fittings and valves), and the Universal Winding Company (textile machinery). In their newsletters, they shared a wide range of new experiments in personnel practices and welfare programs A. B. Rich, "Personnel Problems of Staff Men in Industry," April, 1927, Box 17, Folder "Personnel Management 1927-1930," Dennison Manufacturing Company Records, 1815-1990, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

grade jobs and keeping them moving through from one promotion to the next, you can get better results than if you bring in a good big group of Hunkies and keep them at one poor job all their lives.”⁴¹ The “better class” Garvey advocated bringing in was not comprised of the Hungarian immigrants that he slurred, but most likely native-born whites of Northern European heritage. The Personnel Committee for the Manufacturers’ Research Association published a report in 1924 entitled “Whom to Hire.” Along with “physical qualifications,” “age,” and “prison records” to consider in hiring decisions, race and ethnicity were also primary factors. The report lists short descriptions of the pros and cons of each immigrant group:

Italians are inclined to be transient, preferring the warm foundry in winter and the cool sewer in summer. Their ‘seasonal’ quality renders them an uncertain factor and a definite contributor to labor turnover.

Lithuanians, Poles, and Russians are steady, non-temperamental, phlegmatic, contented with their social status, and, altho not especially skilled, are desirable employees.

Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Germans and English are good, conscientious, desirable and skilled workmen, not of the type suited to rough labor. In general, they are interested in jobs calling for a high degree of skill.⁴²

African Americans remained at the bottom of this racial hierarchy. In the words of some employers, black workers were “unreliable and incompetent,” and few black workers were said to display “initiative, resourcefulness, and persistence.”⁴³ Personnel departments thus helped employers select their preferred employees based on their own preferences and prejudices. As we will see, they would

⁴¹ John A. Garvey, “The Function of the Personnel Department in Technological Unemployment,” 1935, p. 20, Box 17, Folder “Personnel Management 1927-1930,” Dennison Manufacturing Company Records, 1815-1990, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

⁴² “Report of the Personnel Committee on Whom to Hire” 1924, Carton 1, Folder “Personnel Committee,” Manufacturers’ Research Association, Records, 1922-1932, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA. The director of a national employer association described the importance of careful and rational selection of workers: “It would obviously be unwise to expect Russian Jews as a class to be proficient in high-grade mechanical work, whereas most Scandinavians possess natural ability for such work.”Magnus Alexander, “The Labor Problem Analyzed,” *The Open Shop Review* 16,1 (January, 1919) 7

⁴³ Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Black Migration and Poverty: Boston 1865-1900* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 144.

increasingly coordinate with and select graduates from schools that served as helpful repositories for employees with their desired characteristics.

Progressive firms also worked to streamline the training process for new employees. The foreman was often in charge of looking after apprentices, but had very little incentive to do so well or effectively. As one commentator described: “The young men are left entirely to the shop foreman, who may not take any interest in this portion of his duties and who may not possess the faculty of imparting his knowledge to his pupils.”⁴⁴ The largest firms with the greatest resources and need for trained workers opened their own training departments or corporation schools. The National Association of Corporation Schools was founded in 1913 and membership included large utility, railroad, and steel companies such as General Electric, Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company, The Pennsylvania Railroad Company, and Carnegie Steel.⁴⁵ Some large machinery companies, such as Browne & Sharpe, and employer associations like the NMTA and NEFA, also developed formal training schools. Unlike haphazard traditional forms of apprenticeship, these formalized “modern apprenticeship” programs devoted time and instructors to an efficient training regime for new employees. These programs were publicized and advocated by trade journals as cutting edge management practice, although they were expensive, and were typically only undertaken by companies with thousands, not just hundreds, of employees.⁴⁶

In-house training schools could train not only skills, but also identification with the company. In their praise for these programs, employer associations like NMTA and the Master Builders Association (MBA) drew attention to these qualities: “Since added intelligence and technical

⁴⁴ “The Modern Apprentice System,” *The Open Shop* 5, 1 (January 1906) 25.

⁴⁵ F.C. Henderschott, *National Association of Corporation Schools* (New York: AIEE, 1913). Many of the schools of these large corporations focused on the training of white-collar sales and office employees, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁴⁶ “The general subject of the apprenticeship system was one of the most absorbing which came up for discussion among the members of the National Machine Tool Association last week.” “The Modern Apprentice System,” *The Open Shop* 5, 1 (January 1906) 25.

knowledge expand the worker's sphere of power and usefulness [and] develop loyalty...expenditure of time and money by the employer for educational opportunities...[is] entirely justified."⁴⁷ Control of the training process meant that employers could undercut the power of craft unions, not only by circumventing their regulations, but also through cultural and ideological education. One master builder stressed the importance of employer-controlled training as an anti-union tactic: "Educate them...let students feel that [employers] are their best friend; let them grow up under better influences than constant association with union men... do your duty to them and toward the future of the trade."⁴⁸ Many large firms concentrated their educational efforts on grooming future foremen and managers. The manager of Brown & Sharpe's training school wrote: "I believe there is today a demand and an absolute necessity for a large number of these thoroughly trained men – men from whom we can select our foremen and heads of departments."⁴⁹

Smaller companies often did not have the resources to independently finance their own welfare work, personnel departments, and training programs. But many of these companies belonged to industry-wide employer associations that mimicked the strategies of larger firms. The NMTA was one example, founded in 1899 in New York to counter a growing movement of organized machinists.⁵⁰ In 1901 the NMTA abrogated an agreement with the machinists union, the International Association of Machinists, and a rash of strikes occurred across the country. In Boston, 270 machinists, millwrights, pattern makers, blacksmiths and apprentices at the American Tool & Machine Company walked out on June 11.⁵¹ In 1903, the NMTA monthly bulletin began to advertise its principal purpose: "it gives its members expert advice in handling Union demands and

⁴⁷ Magnus W. Alexander, "The Labor Problem Analyzed" *The Open Shop Review* 16,2 (February 1919) 77.

⁴⁸ Samuel Hannaford, "Bricklayers' Trade School and Others" *The Open Shop* 5,8 (August 1906) 387.

⁴⁹ L.D. Burlingame, "The Importance of an Apprentice System" *The Open Shop* 5,1 (January, 1906) 16.

⁵⁰ Robert Wuest, "Industrial Betterment Activities of the National Metal Trades Association," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 44 (1912): 85.

⁵¹ "Another Big Strike," *Boston Evening Transcript*, June 11, 1901.

strikes; it furnishes the men and the money to break unjust strikes; *it prevent individual manufacturers being singled out, trapped or bullied*; it is a counterweight on Metal Trade Labor Unions.”⁵² In case there was any doubt of their anti-union stance, in 1904 they announced the renaming of their monthly bulletin to “The Open Shop.”⁵³

One of the most important functions of local branches of the NMTA was the operation of employment bureaus, “a clearing house for the members...from which to procure their labor supply.”⁵⁴ This bureau allowed companies to select exactly the type of employees they were looking for, based both on training as well as ideological and behavioral traits. By 1904, NMTA had labor bureaus in over 13 cities including Boston. Member employers reported information about each employee to the secretary of the labor bureau, including name, address, age, nationality, class of work, employment history, and notes on performance traits such as “efficiency” (“first class hustler, average, poor”); “disposition” (“pleasant, average, lazy, bad”); “habits” (“good, irregular in attendance, talkative, quits without giving notice, intemperate”).⁵⁵ Employers were also asked to report, daily, the workmen leaving their employment, including specific reasons why they were leaving, as well as any open positions in their establishment. Workers seeking positions could apply to this labor bureau free of charge, and the labor bureau secretary would coordinate placement on a daily basis.⁵⁶

⁵² *Bulletin of the National Metal Trades Association* 2,3 (March 1903), back cover. In 1903, the President of NMTA urged each member to “bear in mind that the perhaps the greatest part of this Association’s work is the moral weight it brings to bear on the labor question...the members should feel it incumbent upon themselves to preach the law and gospel of this Association. Proceedings of the 5th Annual Convention, *Bulletin of the National Metal Trades Association* 2,7A (July 1903), 458-459.

⁵³ W. P. Eagan, “The Passing of the “Bulletin,” *The NMTA Bulletin* 3,12 (December, 1904) 529.

⁵⁴ Wuest, “Industrial Betterment Activities of the National Metal Trades Association,” 84.

⁵⁵ “One Labor Bureau” *The Open Shop* 4,6 (June 1905) 276-277.

⁵⁶ “Worcester Labor Bureau,” *The Iron Age*, July 9, 1903, 10-11.

The employment bureau immediately became one of the most powerful and prized institutions of the NMTA.⁵⁷ These labor bureaus compiled information about thousands of workers: by 1913, the Boston bureau alone had records of 23,454 workmen in the city.⁵⁸ Through their detailed records they kept close tabs on union membership, and these records helped employers break strikes by funneling workers into positions when needed.⁵⁹ The labor bureaus also developed more subtle means of policing the behavior of workers. In October of 1904 they began issuing “Certificates of Recommendation” to “such men as have proven themselves faithful and given efficient service to a member during a labor difficulty.” These certificates took the form of a “handsome booklet, bound in deep red, flexible, morocco leather, the cover of which is lettered in gold.”⁶⁰ They signified to prospective employers that these employees were not labor agitators, and those with certificates were given first priority in placement. NMTA labor bureaus also promoted their positive influence on community life by appealing to anti-immigrant sentiment and racial prejudice. “Criminals and agitators, disturbers and fomenters of trouble leave a city the moment they are watched... For the community, [the employment bureau] is a safeguard against an undesirable

⁵⁷ The *Open Shop* stated in September of 1904 “it is the unanimous opinion of all members of the local Metal Trades Associations where such bureaus are in operation that it is the most valuable feature of the organization; in fact, they are considered almost indispensable.” “National Metal Trades Association Notes,” *The National Metal Trades Association Bulletin* 3,9 (September 1904) 394.

⁵⁸ Chad Pearson, “Making the ‘City of Prosperity’: Engineers, Open-shoppers, Americanizers, and Propagandists in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1900–1925,” *Labor History* 45, no. 1 (February 1, 2004): 14.

⁵⁹ In February of 1904, the Boston Labor Bureau reported the favorable news that “the jobbing pattern makers were distinctly tired of union dictation, and within two weeks, with one single exception, all the large jobbing shops have joined both the national and local association.” A. E. Corbin, “The New England Districts” *National Metal Trades Association Bulletin* 3,2 (February 1904), 72. Only a few months later, the Boston Labor Bureau reported that unions were expecting to greatly add to their numbers during the coming winter, noting that “there are more union machinists in Charleston Navy yard than ever before.” In response, “circulars have been sent to non-union machinists inviting them to a smoker talk entertainment and lunch.” “National Metal Trades Association Notes,” *National Metal Trades Association Bulletin* 3,12 (December 1904) 561.

⁶⁰ “National Metal Trades Association’s Certificate of Recommendation” *The National Metal Trades Association Bulletin* 3,10 (October 1904) 447-448.

class of citizens.”⁶¹ These labor bureaus, like the personnel offices of large firms, played an important role in selecting and encouraging the desired traits of employees.⁶² However, as employers grew increasingly concerned about the cost of investment in the technical training of their workers (especially without a guarantee those employees would stay), they also looked to external institutions to provide it.

The Manual Training Movement, 1880-1900

Boston’s first industrial training school was opened under the auspices of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. MIT had been opened in 1865 as a School of Industrial Science and Art, funded in part through private industrial donors and in part by public funds as a Massachusetts land grant institution under the 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act. In contrast to the theoretical scientific schools annexed to liberal arts colleges, like Harvard’s Lawrence Scientific School, MIT was established as a school of applied science. It aimed to teach students, through laboratory instruction, the scientific principles behind the physical world and the basis of new technological discoveries. In the first decades of its existence, when less than 5% of men and women attended any form of higher education, students at MIT were mostly sons (and a few daughters) of professionals who could afford advanced education. They typically went into supervisory positions in industry or became

⁶¹ A. C. Fischer, “The Employment Department and its Influence Upon a Community,” *The Open Shop* 4,1 (January 1905) 46-48.

⁶² By contrast, in the building trades, attempts by employer associations to establish labor bureaus were unsuccessful. In the aftermath of a broached agreement with the Mason’s Union in 1903, the Master Builders Association (MBA) in Boston established its own labor bureau, asking workmen to “fill out registration cards giving name, place of apprenticeship, length of service and name of last employers, together with a declaration that the signer would not permit any affiliation he might have to work injury to any member of the MBA.” However, unions refused to allow their members to sign the cards of the MBA, and it quickly became ineffective. The stronger building trade unions, with a much higher proportion of unionized employees than their counterparts in the metal trades, maintained the function of labor bureau for themselves. Ham, “Employment Relations in the Construction Industry of Boston,,” 324–25.

professors themselves. MIT's annual tuition of \$200 in 1880 was prohibitively expensive to all but an elite few.⁶³

The president of MIT from 1870-1878, John Runkle, was especially concerned with the scientific and technical education of young people. Runkle was trained as a mathematician at Harvard's Lawrence Scientific School and became one of MIT's first faculty members. Under his leadership, MIT opened a School of Mechanic Arts in 1876, modeled on the Imperial Technical School of Russia, which aimed to both train craftsmen who would leave the school to enter the workforce, and to prepare students for MIT. C. M. Woodward, a Harvard graduate and mathematics professor, set up similar school in St. Louis, and wrote several books on "manual training" that helped publicize the manual training movement around the nation. Manual training schools did not mimic the conditions of the workshop, but aimed to provide training in fundamental scientific and mechanical principles. Highlighting the academic and cultural role of manual arts for all students, as well as the dignity of labor, was also strategic: it placated educators skeptical of the value of "hand" learning and reformers skeptical of class-based education, and also did not directly challenge the authority of craft unions over their control of the trades.

While generating wide support, Boston's first manual training school did not in fact prove successful at training new craftsmen. Based on a list compiled in 1886 of graduates of the School of Mechanic Arts and their future occupations, the constituency at Runkle's school was similar to students who attended MIT, albeit slightly younger. Out of 25 recorded graduates, six became either professors or instructors of mechanical arts around the country, eleven became merchants (in oil, provisions, fancy goods) or manufacturers (of typewriters, sewing machines, wire nails, watches, gold and silver refiners). Four were draftsmen in the New England area, and one became an

⁶³ A. T. Robinson, "Technical Education: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology," *The Open Shop* 4,3 (March 1905) 117-125; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *Sixteenth Annual Catalogue of the Officers and Students, 1880-1881* (Boston: Schofield, 1880) 59.

engineer. Only one was listed as what was likely a mechanic's job, "In repair shop of Lower Pacific Mills."⁶⁴ With \$150 annual tuition fees, the School for Mechanic Arts catered to a fairly well off constituency who tended not to become craftsmen.⁶⁵

Another strain of support for manual training came from philanthropists who believed teaching a useful trade to be the best form of social uplift for the poor. As we saw in Chapter Two, urban settlement houses emerged across the country in the 1880s and 1890s to provide education as well as community services in the poorest immigrant neighborhoods. Many opened industrial schools, including Boston's South End Industrial School in 1882, the North Bennet Street Industrial School (NBSIS) in 1881, and the North End Union Trade School in 1892. The object of the South End Industrial School, representative of the aims of settlement industrial education, was "the education of the poor to the point of independent self-support. Its founders believe that national and social interests demanded a training in the handicrafts for the people who must support themselves."⁶⁶ While intended as a form of uplift for poor workers, records reveal that they instead reached working artisans. Based on the NBSIS attendance records from 1886-87, those who voluntarily enrolled in these courses were primarily dressmakers, teachers, tailors, and students.⁶⁷ The North End Trade Union School offered courses in plumbing, dressmaking, and printing. Likely due to strong craft union pressure in the building and printing trades, courses in plumbing and printing were limited to those already employed in their trades as apprentices.⁶⁸ While these schools

⁶⁴ Student Records, 1885-1886, MIT School of Mechanic Arts Records, 1876-1886, Box 1, AC 499, Institute Archives, MIT, Cambridge, MA.

⁶⁵ "Annual Report of the Committee on Manual Training Schools," Appendix, *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1889* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1890) 165.

⁶⁶ "Practical Philanthropy," *Boston Herald*, March 5 1888, 3.

⁶⁷ North Bennet Street Industrial School Records, 1880-1973; Class Register and Attendance Book, 1886-1887. MC 269, Carton 1, Series IV, 1 Vol. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

⁶⁸ For all courses, students had to be over 17 years of age, and cost \$10 (plumbing), \$25 (dressmaking), and \$100 (printing) per year-long course. Charles Felton Pidgin, "Trade and Technical Education in Massachusetts," in *Labor Bulletin of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts No. 26*, No. 26 (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1903), 58.

did reach some working artisans, because of their high cost and low enrollment, they did not stay functional for long.⁶⁹ Increasingly, these philanthropic institutions would turn to the public sector to stay solvent.

From a number of fronts, there was growing pressure for the public school system to increase opportunities for mechanical training. As enrollment in public primary schools rose for the sons and daughters of merchants and shopkeepers, so did pressure on the Boston school committee to update the curriculum to reflect a wider range of occupations. Mechanical drawing was added to the common school curriculum in 1839, and sewing in 1854.⁷⁰ In 1870 the school board authorized a committee to consider the subject of establishing industrial schools, explaining: “our present school education is too exclusively the preparation either for professional life or for a mercantile or shop-keeping life.” The school committee also noted the problem of training that vexed industrial leaders: “Mechanics and artisans take few or no apprentices, and a girl or boy, on leaving school, cannot learn a trade or become skilled in any useful labor.”⁷¹ They recommended that the public schools help close this gap by developing mechanical drawing for boys and sewing, cutting, fitting, and advanced needlework for girls. This expansion was justified as both a democratic duty to cater to all children and members of the community, retain students interest to keep them in school longer, and help them avoid “dead-end” jobs. Trade education for women would not only allow them to pursue an honest trade, but provide wholesome moral and cultural education to steer women away from

⁶⁹ At the North End Trade School, plumbing was capped at 33, printing and dressmaking at 10. Enrollment often did not even reach these caps, however, and by 1902, only 34 students had taken the full plumbing course since the opening of the school, while none thus far had completed the printing or dressmaking course. A few students took courses for weeks or months at a time, but even these enrollments were not high – in 1902, 33 were enrolled in plumbing, 8 in printing, and 3 in dressmaking. *Ibid.*, 61–65. “The Apprenticeship System,” *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor, 1907* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1907) 62. As discussed in Chapter Two, the NBSIS transferred its services to the public schools beginning in 1883. *The Work of the North Bennet Street Industrial School from 1881 to 1887* (Boston: Rand Avery Company, 1887), 5.

⁷⁰ Barnard Capen, *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1858*, 121, 142; *Semi-annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1874*, 89.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 359.

urban dangers and prostitution. Sewing was particularly appropriate because women could conduct this work in their own home, and use it in their future lives as homemakers.⁷²

Public-private agreements were set up as preliminary experiments. In 1874, MIT provided facilities, instruction, and teachers for specialized public evening mechanical drawing schools.⁷³ In 1882, the school committee worked with the Boston Industrial School Association to pay for supplies and tuition for the boys of two grammar schools in the South End to learn the elements of carpentry for two hours per week. By 1886, boys from North End's Eliot school attended NBSIS for 2 hours a week of carpentry, cabinet making, and printing, while girls from the sister Hancock school took cooking classes.⁷⁴

Boston Superintendent of Schools Edwin Seaver, who helped initiate these arrangements, became a strong champion of a full-fledged public manual training high school. He was inspired by the ideas of John Runkle and C. M. Woodward. Like them, he did not advocate for "the teaching of any one trade, but the mastery of the fundamental principles."⁷⁵ His plan for a three-year long "Mechanic Arts" high school course consisted of a curriculum equally divided between mental and manual training, with three hours for shop-work, one hour for free-hand and mechanical drawing, and the rest of the day devoted to academic work.⁷⁶ In June of 1888, MIT gave notice that it would be closing its School of Mechanic Arts. It argued that this type of school was not only outside the scope of its charter, but should be a public responsibility.⁷⁷ Determined to open an equivalent high

⁷² Ibid, 360-63.

⁷³ *Semi-annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1874*, 47.

⁷⁴ *The Work of the North Bennet Street Industrial School from 1881 to 1887*, 5.

⁷⁵ "Industrial Education," *Boston Herald Supplement*, January 19, 1884.

⁷⁶ Edwin Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Boston, 1883*, 34-48.

⁷⁷ The precise timing of this closing was likely precipitated by the planned opening of new manual training high school in Cambridge that fall. Frederick Hastings Rindge, a Harvard-educated Cantabridgian and son of a wealthy textile merchant, funded a new Cambridge Manual Training School, the first of its kind in the region. MIT argued that its own private school, which charged a hefty tuition rate, would not allow it to compete with these public alternatives. "Annual

school in Boston, Edwin Seaver continued his canvassing for public and private funding. In 1893, the Boston Mechanic Arts High School (MAHS) opened its doors.⁷⁸

However, like MIT's School of Mechanic Arts, at a time when education past grammar school was rare for the working classes, those who attended these schools did not use them to go on to enter positions as craftsmen. A list of the pursuits of the school's first graduating class of 1896, prepared by the Headmaster of the MAHS in 1897, reveal a very similar constituency to those who attended MIT's School. Of the 55 graduates, 22 continued on to pursue higher education, including 14 who entered MIT. Four became draftsmen in architects' offices, and six became salesmen. Only 18, or less than one third, pursued some type of "mechanical pursuit" for which their specific training in school was nominally intended. By 1901, many more had become manufacturers themselves, or were chemists, designers, city officials, or instructors. Only seven were recorded in mechanical occupations as a machinist, pattern maker, electrician, and employees of an electric, machinery, and telephone company.⁷⁹ While the manual training movement was meant to train a new batch of American craftsmen, those who attended these schools still chiefly filled supervisory positions, and with a slight overrepresentation of engineers, their occupational patterns did not differ significantly from the graduates of Boston's English High School.

Report of the Committee on Manual Training Schools," 165; F. Hastings Rindge Collection, Cambridge Historical Commission, Cambridge, MA.

⁷⁸ George Conley, "Report of George H. Conley, Supervisor" Appendix, *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1896* (Boston: Rockwell & Churchill, 1897), 112.

⁷⁹ M.A.H.S. Correspondence, 1893-1898, Mechanical Arts H.S. Historical Files, Collection 0420.015, Box 1, City of Boston Archives, Boston, MA; Boston Public Schools, *Report of the Mechanic Arts High School* (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1901) 41-43.

Private Trade Schools, 1900-1916

A new wave of private trade schools emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century. Most of these schools were funded through large philanthropic gifts from industrialists. While these trade schools attracted some students and recuperated some of their costs through tuition, they ran into strong opposition from labor unions. In the arena of training for male artisans in which craft unions were strong, these programs proved unsuccessful in catering to future male artisans, and instead shifted their focus to training higher-level technicians and engineers. By contrast, trade schools for women in crafts such as dressmaking, a nonunionized sector, were more successful in reaching their target demographic.

In 1900, the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association (MCMA) opened a school for the explicit purpose of teaching young apprentices a trade. The problem of apprenticeship had been central to the founding of MCMA in 1795, when a group of master craftsmen including Paul Revere met to discuss the problem of runaway apprentices and draft a petition to the state legislature on the problem. They founded an association for the purpose of promoting the mechanic arts and providing funds for members' widows and families. By the turn of the twentieth century the MCMA was part charity, part social club, and part employers association of leading tradesmen and manufacturers in the state. Before opening their own school, the MCMA had already donated \$4000 to help open MIT's School of Mechanic Arts and had made a financial contribution to the Boston School Committee in 1891 to open MAHS.⁸⁰ In contrast to the existing manual training schools, however, they wanted an institution that would provide actual trade instruction. In 1900, they announced what they call a "pioneer evening vocational school," with planned courses in plumbing,

⁸⁰ "A Brief Historic Sketch of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association, 1794 -1930," 11, Box 8, Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston Massachusetts; Meeting of the Finance Committee, Feb 26 1891, MCMA Committee Meeting Minutes, 1890-97 Vol 3, p. 3, MCMA Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston Massachusetts.

carpentry, masonry, drawing, reinforced concrete construction, sheet metal work, heating and ventilating, steam and gas fitting, and electricity, in the basement of their Mechanics Hall. Courses cost \$12 and meet three times per week from 7-9pm. The students they were able to attract in their first years fit their target demographic. In 1904, according to their first official report, 57% of those registered were “regularly employed as apprentices or helpers in the trade they are studying,” and several others were “learning the trade that they may be of more value to their employers.”⁸¹

Plumbing classes were by far the most popular, followed by sheet metal and electricity. The MCMA worked with a number of employers associations for both supplies and trainees. For a new tile-laying class they planned in 1908, the Tile Dealer’s Association provided supplies free of charge.⁸² The MCMA even established formal agreements with employment associations for the training of apprentices, circumventing labor unions. The Massachusetts Association of Sheet Metal Workers, for example, built into their 4-year apprenticeship contract that the apprentice must attend the MCMA trade school for three years at the employer’s expense, and would only receive his apprenticeship certificate if he had “served faithfully” and possessed a diploma from the MCMA school.⁸³

The new MCMA trade school, however, repeatedly ran into difficulties. In its first year, it was only able to secure enough students for courses in plumbing, masonry, carpentry, and drawing, despite the plans of its leaders for a wider array of courses. In 1903, the MCMA blamed the Mason’s

⁸¹ Trade School Report, Executive Committee Meeting January 15, 1904, p. 10-14, MCMA Trade School Executive Committee Minutes, 1903-1916, MCMA Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston Massachusetts.

⁸² *MCMA Proceedings of the 114th Annual Meeting, January 20, 1909* (Boston: C. M. Barrows Co., 1909), 26.

⁸³ *MCMA Proceedings of the 113th Annual Meeting, January 15, 1908* (Boston: C. M. Barrows Co., 1908), 30. The MCMA proudly touted this relationship: “It should also be said that this highly satisfactory condition is a direct result of the great interest which the master sheet-metal workers have taken in the class and in their apprentices. These progressive employers are either paying the tuition fee for boys under satisfactory guarantee of attendance, or are returning the investment the boy himself makes in the form of increased wages. The result of this to the employer will be a gradual building up of a well-trained body of workmen, from whose ranks the trivial and incompetent have been eliminated.” Executive Committee Meeting January 16, 1906, MCMA Trade School Executive Committee Minutes, 1903-1916, p.106, Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.

Trade Union for difficulties in procuring the services of a suitable instructor.⁸⁴ In 1908, the Tile-Setter's Union effectively prevented enrollment in the MCMA tile-laying class, forcing the class to be cancelled altogether.⁸⁵ Enrollment remained below 100 in the school's first years of existence, and far fewer students remained for the full 3 or 4 years to receive a diploma. At its peak in 1912, the MCMA trade school had 10 instructors and 205 students, and in subsequent years enrollment declined significantly.

Other institutions joined the MCMA in providing trade education. One institution was Franklin Union, which opened its doors in 1908. The funding for this school came from the Franklin Fund, a bequest to the city of Boston by Benjamin Franklin in 1789 for "forming and advancing other young men," and a matching grant from Andrew Carnegie to found a school like Cooper Union.⁸⁶ Because of the public status of the Franklin Fund, the board of trustees included a labor representative and unions pushed strongly to shape its direction. While the plans for the school were still being determined, the BCLU passed a resolution on December 18th, 1904 declaring their opposition to trade schools:

Whereas it is impossible for any young man to acquire a trade in any trade school;
Whereas, there is no dearth of mechanics in any skilled trades; and
Whereas, the advocates of trade schools are either men who pay small wages, or work their help long hours, or are dilettante labor reformers; therefore, be it
Resolved, by the representatives of organized labor of the city of Boston, that we protest against the establishment of a trade school by the board of managers of the Franklin Fund.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Executive Committee Meeting October 6, 1903, MCMA Trade School Executive Committee Minutes, 1903-1916, p. 9, MCMA Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston Massachusetts.

⁸⁵ "Mr. Grueby explained to the Committee the attitude of the Tile Setter's Union of this City and elsewhere towards the apprenticeship system and towards graduates from Trade Schools, showing the determined effort on the part of the Unions to restrict and limit the number of tile-setters. This was given as the reason for the failure to obtain scholars in our Tile Laying class." Executive Committee Meeting October 29, 1908, MCMA Trade School Executive Committee Minutes, 1903-1916, p. 100, MCMA Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston Massachusetts.

⁸⁶ Michele R. Costello, *Benjamin Franklin and the Invention of Microfinance* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), 7-11, 84.

⁸⁷ "Opposed To It" *Boston Daily Globe*, December 19, 1904, 9.

Instead, the BCLU supported a free institute that would offer technical instruction to employed adult workers.⁸⁸ Frank K. Foster, the labor representative on the board of trustees of the Franklin Fund, signed on to a statement of the BCLU executive committee that read: “we are in favor of wider opportunities for the higher industrial and technical training, by means of which mechanics may perfect themselves the in theoretical and practical branches of their trade.”⁸⁹ Rather than opposing technical education per se, unions opposed trade schools that would undermine their craft power.

When the Franklin Union opened, its courses and policies reflected this negotiation with labor unions. It offered evening courses in elementary mechanics, drawing and drafting, industrial arithmetic and estimating, steam and gas engines, heating and ventilation, structural materials, and chemistry.⁹⁰ Compared to those offered by the MCMA, these courses were more theoretical and school-based than workshop-based.⁹¹ In addition, courses were only open to men who were already employed in the trades during the day. The first students were engineers, firemen, machinists, steamfitters, and carpenters with an average age of 29.⁹² The majority of students were born in Massachusetts, with a minority from Canada, Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia, or Russia.⁹³ These were not apprentices like those enrolled in the MCMA school, but mature artisans who sought more

⁸⁸ Ibid; “Trade Schools” *Boston Daily Globe*, April 15, 1905, 3.

⁸⁹ “Is Opposed to ‘Short Cuts’” *Boston Daily Globe*, March 6, 1905, 8.

⁹⁰ Charles L. Hubbard, “Heating and Ventilating Plant of the Franklin Union, Boston” *Engineering Review* 19,7 (July, 1909) 39.

⁹¹ The MCMA’s own assessment of the difference between their institution and Franklin Union supports this characterization: “the instruction is limited to lectures on the sciences which underlie the various mechanical trades. No attempt is made to do the sort of practical work which constitutes the main form of instruction in our school.” Executive Committee Meeting January 16, 1906, MCMA Trade School Executive Committee Minutes, 1903-1916, p.103, MCMA Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston Massachusetts.

⁹² Charles L. Hubbard, “Heating and Ventilating Plant of the Franklin Union, Boston,” 39.

⁹³ In 1912, 60% of students at Franklin Union were born in Massachusetts, compared to 39% of the male workforce, and 75% were born in the U.S., compared to 55% of the male workforce. Irish, Russian, and Italian workers continued to be underrepresented for the next decades. The overrepresentation of native-born students would persist for the next decades: in 1931, 81% of students were born in the U.S., compared to 60% of the working male population. Women were admitted, but enrolled in extremely low numbers: in 1928, out of 1,875 evening students, 17 were women. Franklin Union, *Annual Report of the Director*, 1912, 1915, 1928, 1931.

advanced scientific knowledge of their trades.⁹⁴ Unions did not win their demand for free instruction: each course cost \$4-\$15, paid upfront as a registration fee.⁹⁵ However, enrollment was much higher than in MCMA courses. 389 students enrolled in 1908, rising to over 1,000 students in 1911, and peaking at 1,900 students during WWI. Other Boston private trade schools, such as the Lowell Institute for Industrial Foreman (1903), YMCA Evening Polytechnic Institute (1904), and Wentworth Institute (1911) also ultimately shifted to higher levels of supervisory, research, or engineering instruction.

Trade instruction for women also increased in the decade before WWI. Because of the lack of women's craft unions in this sector, there was not organized opposition, and trade schools quickly became a primary means of learning a trade. Trade classes in dressmaking, millinery, sewing, and cooking were made available in philanthropic organizations such as the YWCA, the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, and the North Bennet Street Industrial School.⁹⁶ The primary institution was the philanthropic Boston Trade School for Girls, opened as a summer experiment in trade training in July of 1904 by several women settlement house leaders including Mary Morton Kehew, president of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union. While Kehew had been active in promoting women's labor union organizing, and was a founding member of the Women Trade Union League in 1903, the Trade School for Girls reflected an alternative strategy of aiding working

⁹⁴ Many worked for large construction and electrical companies as well as the City of Boston, but many also worked for small firms: in 1912, nearly 500 different firms were represented among the student body. In 1931, the largest employers were Edison Electric Illuminating Company, Bethlehem Shipbuilding Company, and the City of Boston, followed by railroad companies, streetcar companies, electrical companies, shoe manufacturers, and the state of Massachusetts. Franklin Union, *Annual Report of the Director*, 1912, 1931.

⁹⁵ Franklin Union Circular of Information 1912-1913, p. 8-31, Franklin Union Circular of Information, Pamphlet Box, Widener Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA,

⁹⁶ "Trade and Technical Education," *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor*, 1902 (Washington: GPO, 1902), 115.

women.⁹⁷ The school offered courses in sewing, dressmaking, millinery, machine operating, design, and domestic science.

Based on school records, the school seemed to have reached its target demographic. While the majority had graduated from grammar school, the students came from poor or working-class backgrounds. “The school appeals entirely to the working people, such as teamsters, cab-drivers, bakers, and city laborers, whose children must become self-supporting within a year or two. Many of the parents are making great sacrifices in order to give their daughters the training.”⁹⁸ One mother wrote of her daughter’s situation: “The only thing I can do is to put her in the store as a cash girl and I don’t like to do that. Why are there not more schools for girls who have to work?”⁹⁹ Most students were Irish and Jewish, but there were also a large number of African Americans: between 1905-1909, 86 students, or 9% of the total school attendees, were African American. For some, the school opened up access to better employment: “One girl who’s parents were in very poor circumstances, and who was about to enter a candy factory, where she could contribute her wages of 3-4 dollars a week to the family support, was influenced by a friend to attend the school for a few months.... at the end of 6 months placed in millinery establishment, last week earned \$9 on piece work.”¹⁰⁰ From records of the starting wages and advanced wages of former students in 1909, this story appears common, even for African American graduates: out of 11 African American students recorded, all obtained positions in either dressmaking, millinery, or sewing machine operating at the

⁹⁷ Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 184–87.

⁹⁸ *The Second Annual Report of the Boston Trade School for Girls* (Boston, 1906), 10.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰⁰ *The First Annual Report of the Boston Trade School for Girls* (Boston, 1905), 13; *The Second Annual Report of the Boston Trade School for Girls* (Boston, 1906), 10.

end of six months to 1.5 years of training, most starting at a \$4 weekly wage and increasing to \$6-\$8 within several years, a common wage for young women.¹⁰¹

A 1916 survey confirms that this school became an important institution for the training of Boston women dressmakers and milliners. According to this survey, nearly 30% of Boston milliners had learned their trade in the Boston Trade School for Girls, compared to 60% through apprenticeship. Employers also relied on this institution to reduce their training costs and substitute for apprenticeship. The 1916 study found that 50 shops in Boston refused to take on apprentices altogether. By contrast, in Philadelphia, which was not home to a comparable trade school, 93% of milliners had been apprenticed, and most shops trained their own apprentices.¹⁰² The Boston trade school thus had a significant impact on the dominant training pattern for female artisans, and did help many of its graduates find employment. A few educational entrepreneurs also tried to take advantage of demand for dressmaking instruction, often advertising in newspapers. The “Ladies Tailor, Dressmaking and Millinery College” took out an ad in the Boston Herald in 1898, promoted a “new dress ‘free’” for each pupil beginning “her instruction in our dressmaking department.” This “college” was likely no more than the apprentice department of a dress shop. The McDowell Dressmaking and Millinery School, also advertised extensively, was a national chain, established first in New York and Chicago in 1891 before opening in Boston by 1912.¹⁰³ It offered day and evening classes for novices as well as artisans who sought advanced training in cutting, fitting, and dressmaking.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ *The Fifth Annual Report of the Boston Trade School for Girls* (Boston, 1909), 30-35; John Daniels, *In Freedom's Birthplace; a Study of the Boston Negroes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 379.

¹⁰² Perry, *The Millinery Trade in Boston and Philadelphia*, 106.

¹⁰³ *Annual Report of the U.S. Commissioner of Education 1912*, Vol. II (Washington: GPO, 1913), 522.

¹⁰⁴ Students were allowed to come for as many hours of instruction as they wanted, the majority staying 1-3 weeks, the full course of training lasting three months. “Trade and Technical Education,” *Seventeenth Annual Report of the U.S. Commissioner of Labor 1902* (Washington: GPO, 1902), 129.

The growth of women's trade education can be understood as a symptom of weak unions among craftswomen. Early women's labor organizing relied on alliances with middle class women progressive reformers, such as those forged in the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL). The WTUL was founded in Boston in 1903 at an AFL conference by Mary Kenney, a fourth-grade educated working-class Irishwoman whose organizing success among Chicago female bookbinders led her to a position as an AFL organizer in 1892, and William English Walling, a wealthy Kentucky native and Harvard Law School graduate turned socialist. Despite the AFL's formal endorsement of the WTUL, in practice these women's unions received little direct support. Hostility to women members from male union members and leadership, internal ethnic divisions, and mistrust between middle-class native-born women allies and rank and file workers stymied many of the earliest efforts to organize women in the trades.¹⁰⁵ Industrial unions, organized across skill level, and not based on control of the training process, proved more successful for women's unions, and would be at the forefront of labor union expansion in the next decades.¹⁰⁶

Private sector industrial training for both men and women grew significantly in this period, but ran up against multiple obstacles. For women's trade training, the problems were primarily financial. Establishing trade schools with the proper, up-to-date equipment and paying trained artisans as instructors was expensive. The students to which trade schools catered were also those who could little afford tuition or extend their schooling. Unlike the MCMA or Franklin Union, the

¹⁰⁵ While the official stance of the AFL under the leadership of Samuel Gompers was to promote female membership and "equal pay for equal work," the decentralized and autonomous structure of craft union locals made movements in this direction slow. Many local unions passed resolutions prohibiting women from joining their unions in the 1880s and 1890s. McCreesh, *Women in the Campaign to Organize Garment Workers, 1880-1917*, 40; See also Deutsch, *Women and the City*, 161–219; Nutter, *The Necessity of Organization*; Allen Davis, "The Women's Trade Union League: Origins and Organizations," *Labor History* 5 (1964): 3–17.

¹⁰⁶ In 1902, Boston was home to one female craft union, Women Tailor's Union No. 11, of the AFL-affiliated United Garment Workers Union, but three more industrial union locals (the Shirt and Cloak Makers Union No. 26, the Ladies Tailor and Dressmakers Union No. 36, and the Ladies Wrapper Makers Union No. 37) affiliated with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, founded in 1900. "Labor Organizations in Massachusetts," *Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Massachusetts Labor Bulletin No. 24* (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1902) 112-115

Boston Trade School did not charge fees, which helped attract women, but also curtailed the institution financially. When enrollment surpassed 300, the Boston Trade School turned to the public school system to continue the industrial training of women. In male industrial education, not only did these institutions face similar large costs, but labor unions pushed back against explicit trade training. Institutions like Franklin Union shifted away from training artisans and toward advanced and theoretical courses, catering to a smaller (but wealthier and more educated) constituency who aimed to become supervisory engineers and executives. This, however, left the problem of trade training for young boys unmet. One employer commented in 1906: “The Carnegie School of Technology and similar institutions throughout the country are intended to embrace a much larger sphere of learning than the trade school proper...but there are thousands of American boys who have neither the time nor the means...to pursue such courses of study and yet are desirous and capable of becoming skilled mechanics.”¹⁰⁷ The need for public industrial training, in the eyes of many, was a problem that could only be solved by the public schools.

Public Alternatives, 1906-1916

Promoters of public industrial education forged a powerful coalition of educators, philanthropists, business and labor leaders. Their alliance led to the formation of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education in November of 1906.¹⁰⁸ At their founding meeting at Cooper Union in New York, Boston educational, philanthropic, and industrial figures led the gathering. Henry S. Pritchett, current president of MIT, was elected President of the Society. On the Board of

¹⁰⁷ Anthony Ittner, “Apprentices and Trade Schools,” *The Open Shop* 5,1 (January, 1906) 27.

¹⁰⁸ National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education, *Proceedings of the Organization Meetings, Bulletin 1* (January 1907), 13. Many employers not involved with this specific national initiative still supported this new direction of public education. “Manual Training Schools: Wise Boards of Education Recognizing their Necessity,” *Bulletin of the NMTA* 3,12 (December 1904), 533; Anthony Ittner, “We Must Educate Our Boys,” *The Open Shop* 4,8 (Aug 1905) 368.

Managers sat Louis Rouillion, director of Franklin Union; Robert A. Woods, director of the South End House and leader in Boston's settlement house movement, and Mary Morton Kehew, president of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union. Boston business leaders on the board included Frederick P. Fish, the President of American Telephone & Telegraph Company, and James P. Munroe, the Treasurer of Munroe Felt & Paper Company. Only one labor leader was on the board in 1906, but the number increased in subsequent years after the AFL came out in support of public industrial education, which the AFL believed it could shape to be more in the interest of labor if union leaders were involved in its crafting.¹⁰⁹ Stressing the necessity of a more systematic and widespread provision of industrial training, speakers at the society's first meeting urged the nations' public schools to make industrial education a central concern.

The wide range of advocates of "vocational education" did not all agree on its meaning and purpose, and a major fault line was the precise relationship of schools to industry. David Snedden, a graduate and professor at Columbia University's Teacher's College who would go on to shape industrial education policy in Massachusetts, offered one vision. Given the declining opportunities for apprenticeship and quality training provided by employers, Snedden believed the public schools had a responsibility to offer not only academic education to a select few but also vocational trade training for the working classes. Snedden imagined schools that would be modeled directly on the workshop, staffed with working craftsmen rather than academic teachers, training students for jobs they could enter immediately.¹¹⁰ By contrast, philosopher and educator John Dewey believed the

¹⁰⁹ F. J. McNulty of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers served on the board in 1906, joined by John Golden of the United Textile Workers of America in 1907, and James O'Connell of the International Association of Machinists in 1908. President of the AFL Samuel Gompers authorized a full investigation of industrial education in 1908, which recommended a system of public industrial education that worked in cooperation with organized labor. Gompers also appeared on the program of an NSPIE national convention in 1914. National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education, *Proceedings of the Organization Meetings, Bulletin 1* (January 1907), 5; *Bulletin 4* (October 1907), 4; *Bulletin 5* (April 1908), 2; *Bulletin 20* (Dec. 9-12, 1914) 7; Winslow, *Industrial Education*.

¹¹⁰ David Snedden, "Vocational Education," in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924* (Carbondale: SIU Press, 2008), 460-65.

current public school curriculum should be rebuilt around collaborative problem solving and scientific inquiry that would empower individuals, collectively, to reshape the new industrial order along more democratic lines.¹¹¹ Rather than merely “‘adapt’ workers to the existing industrial regime,” Dewey believed his version of vocational education would “first alter...and ultimately transform it.”¹¹² However, as we will see, the visions of both camps came up against the structural limitations of what education reform alone could accomplish.

With the backing of leading employers, educators, and labor unions, the state of Massachusetts spurred on new efforts in industrial education. Shoe manufacturer and Democratic Governor William L. Douglass formed a Massachusetts Commission on Industrial and Technical Education in 1905. The Douglass Commission, as it was known, produced a report that strongly criticized current forms of manual training as primarily cultural education and not effectively related to industry. It recommended a separate system of industrial schools, not under the leadership of the State Board of Education, but under a separate Commission on Industrial Education. This new Commission, formed in 1906, was composed of educational reformers, employers, and organized labor.¹¹³ The effective leader of the commission was Paul Hanus, mathematician, educator, and future dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, who was more committed to reforming the current public school system than creating a separate industrial training regime. Within three years, jurisdictional battles between the Commission on Industrial Education and the State Board of Education led to the folding of the separate Commission back into the State Board of Education, which now took on the expansion of industrial education as part of its wider educational mandate.

¹¹¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1916), 230, 306–20.

¹¹² John Dewey, “Education vs. Trade Training: Reply to David Snedden,” in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924* (Carbondale: SIU Press, 2008), 412.

¹¹³ “Favor a Paid Commission, CLU Delegates Debate the Trade School Question and Adopt Resolve,” *Boston Daily Globe*, March 20, 1905; “Protests to Council; Labor Man to Be on Trade Board,” *Boston Daily Globe*, June 18, 1906, 3.

Two of the leading advocates of industrial education, and future architects of national vocational legislation, David Snedden and Charles Prosser, were appointed Commissioner of Education and Deputy Commissioner of Vocational Education, respectively.¹¹⁴

New public industrial education offerings in Boston reflected a compromise forged with union leaders. Since the Mechanic Arts High School opened, the Boston School Committee had made manual training an elective subject in several high schools in 1904.¹¹⁵ Under the separate industrial commission, the Boston School Committee had converted several city initiatives into half-state-funded industrial schools.¹¹⁶ One was an evening Industrial School, established in 1908, which used the facilities of MAHS and over the next several years developed into several branch high schools. The school was limited to those already pursuing a trade, a labor-friendly restriction. Courses of study were arranged to supplement and advance the work of students employed in machine shops, offices of architects, builders, designers, illustrators, or decorators, and those preparing to enter technical institutes.¹¹⁷

In 1909, the Boston school committee took over the private Boston Trade School for Girls, which was to be half-funded by the municipality and half by the state, offering trade instruction in dressmaking, millinery, clothing-machine operating, and straw-machine operating. Without union opposition in women's trade sector, this school continued to serve as a successful means of placing female artisans. "It is a common occurrence for a Trade School graduate to come in and say Miss A

¹¹⁴ Prosser also served as the Executive Secretary of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education from 1912-1915. Marvin Lazerson, *Origins of the Urban School: Public Education in Massachusetts, 1870-1915* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 151-77. Scholars of vocational education have narrated this commission as a turning point in industrial education. Lazerson points to it as the moment when vocationalism became a central commitment of the public schools, which had previously focused on academic and moral education. I would argue that this moment should be seen as one step on a continuum of school experimentation with curriculum – especially on a local level – to meet public demand, especially in the context of a broad array of private institutions doing the same.

¹¹⁵ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1905*, 77-78.

¹¹⁶ In 1909, the separate commission was folded back into the state school department, which continued to subsidize industrial schools through local school committees. *Ibid.*, 151-71.

¹¹⁷ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools 1910*, 92-103.

or Mr. B is going to promote me and wants another girl to take my place, or a telephone call will come: 'The girl you sent me Saturday is fine, send me two more just like her.'"¹¹⁸ The school was similar to the High School of Practical Arts (HSPA), founded as a "sister" school to the boys-only Mechanic Arts High in 1907, which had developed a popular dressmaking program. One graduate of HSPA, Mary T. Hogan, described in 1912 how her dressmaking training had enabled her to work as an independent dressmaker, and was now making 40% more than in her previous work in the waist-making rooms of a specialty women's clothing store, the Solov-Hinds Company.¹¹⁹ However, as female artisans were declining with the rise of the ready-made garment industry, the schools shifted their offering to match new labor market needs. In 1914, Trade school officials planned an expansion in the area of most demand: sewing machine operating. "The present school is highly efficient in preparing dressmakers and milliners but these no longer represent the majority of women in skilled trades, 80 or 90 per cent of whom are believed to be machine operators...The skilled power machine worker received greater compensation as a rule than the hand needle worker...The advisory board of this school together with the state school officials...have submitted a plan for the extension of the Trade School...equipped with up-to-date machines for 60 workers."¹²⁰ The plan to extend in sewing machine operating received the support of the industrial labor unions in the garment industry: "both employers and the garment workers' organization strongly favor such trade extension."¹²¹ While the trade school presented sewing machine operating as remunerative occupation, it marked a decline from the position that custom dressmaking once

¹¹⁸ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools 1913*, 99-101.

¹¹⁹ HSPH Alumni Association Meeting Minutes, 1912-1940, 3, Boston City Archives, Boston, MA.

¹²⁰ *Annual Report of the Boston School Committee, 1911*, 44-45.

¹²¹ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1914*, 57.

held. While the most experienced and successful dressmakers could earn \$15-25 per week in 1900, the highest rates for female factory workers ranged between \$10-12 per week in 1913.¹²²

Attempts to establish daytime trade schools for boys proved to be more difficult. These schools required expensive and up-to-date equipment, drew limited enrollment, and also more directly challenged craft unions. In 1909, afternoon classes for high school students in electrical manufacturing were started in Charlestown High School, commercial designing in Dorchester High School, and jewelry making and silver-smithing in East Boston High School.¹²³ The Boston school committee also managed to get union approval for two state-subsidized “pre-apprenticeship” schools for students who intended to become apprentice bookbinders, printers, and sheet metal workers.¹²⁴ However, all of these programs quickly collapsed. The bookbinding and printing schools attracted very few students and were folded into pre-vocational courses in elementary schools within a year.¹²⁵ The electrical manufacturing course was discontinued within a year because “the equipment in the school was planned for woodwork alone” and “the making of interchangeable parts was thereby rendered impossible.” The commercial design course was also discontinued within a year due to “decreased attendance.”¹²⁶ The school for sheet-metal workers never opened at all.

In 1912, a Boys Industrial School opened, half-state, half city-funded. This school, as well as all the school committee’s industrial work, was placed under the leadership of Frank V. Thompson. Like Runkle, Woodward, and Pritchett, Thompson was a former mathematics teacher who became

¹²² The factory worker rates cited are the highest union rates listed for garment workers in Boston, coat-makers and tailors, which distinguished between men’s and women’s rates. BLS 1914, “Union Wages and Hours of Labor,” p. 22-23; Deutsch, *Women and the City*, 80.

¹²³ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1909*, 42.

¹²⁴ “Training for Work Urged, Industrial Education Discussed” *Boston Daily Globe*, April 25, 1910, 2.

¹²⁵ *Annual Report of the Boston School Committee, 1910*, 78.

¹²⁶ *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1910*, 55-56.

an ardent champion of vocational training for young people.¹²⁷ As we saw in Chapter Two, Thompson believed that public education was a public service that should be responsive to the demands of the community. He advocated vocational education as one of many important services that should be publicly available. Thompson was careful to stress the schools' compatibility with the interests of organized labor in his report. It would not replace apprenticeship, he insisted, but give boys wider background knowledge that would allow them to advance faster in their trade. According to Thompson, the school was "intended for those boys who desire training that will prepare them for industrial work...[and] give him a training that he could not hope to secure if he began work as an unskilled apprentice." The course of study was 1-2 years, and consisted of shop work, technical and academic work. By 1914, the Trade School was receiving more applicants than it had capacity for, and plans were made to expand into large quarters. However, through 1920 its enrollment was still around 200 students per year, much smaller than the enrollment of Wentworth or Franklin Union.¹²⁸ Trade unions also found reason to criticize Thompson for his handling of industrial education, and a faction of the BCLU unsuccessfully mobilized against him when he sought election as School Superintendent.¹²⁹

In part to address the high costs of maintaining industrial equipment in separate schools, Boston School Committee also organized several programs in which students rotated between school and employment. As we saw in Chapter Two, the school committee launched both voluntary

¹²⁷ Thompson received a doctorate from St. Anselm College, in Manchester, New Hampshire in 1895 and worked as a school principal in New England before becoming headmaster of Boston's High School of Commerce in 1906 (discussed further in the next chapter). In 1910 he became assistant superintendent in charge of "industrial education," and from 1918 until his death in 1921, he became Superintendent of Schools. Frank V. Thompson, "Vocational Guidance in Boston," *The School Review* 23, no. 2 (1915): 105–112; Frank Victor Thompson, *Commercial Education in Public Secondary Schools* (Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: World Book Company, 1915); Frank Victor Thompson, *Schooling of the Immigrant* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920).

¹²⁸ By 1918, Wentworth and Franklin Union each enrolled over 1,500 students. "Record Enrollment at Wentworth" *Boston Daily Globe*, Nov 22, 1917, 6; Survey Committee on Franklin Union, *From No-Man's-Land to Leadership; Report of the Survey Committee on Franklin Union*. (Boston, Mass, 1931), 18.

¹²⁹ "Abrahams Denies Request of CLU," *Boston Daily Globe*, June 3, 1918, 5.

and compulsory “continuation” schools based on similar schools in Germany. The latter grew out of the state industrial commission and thus were coordinated between schools, employers, and unions – perhaps the closest thing to a regulated industrial training regime that Boston ever developed, before these schools collapsed in the Great Depression.¹³⁰ Another set of programs, without union oversight, were cooperative high school classes that started as small-scale experiments arranged directly with local employers. In 1914 the Hyde Park High School became the first to offer a cooperative course in machine-shop work for 65 boys, partnering with local machine shops like American Tool & Machine, B. F. Sturtevant Company, and the NY, NH, & Hartford Railroad. After one year of shop-work in the school shop, second-year students worked three days per week at their partnered company. The school shop instructor would visit them at work and consult with their foreman, and develop their school curriculum for the remaining two days per week to “help them in their particular trade.”¹³¹ They also received training in shop mathematics, drawing, shop science, and English. These companies were almost all members of strongly anti-union employers associations.¹³² B. F. Sturtevant, whose representatives regularly attended meetings of the New

¹³⁰ Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1914, 48. Studies of successful industrial training experiments in the United States often point to the state of Wisconsin, which set up a similar system in 1911, administered by representatives of labor, agriculture, and business, in which young workers age 14-17 received part-time instruction in schools in trades including machinery, construction, and printing. (Not surprisingly, a state with a high proportion of Germans). The program grew from 325 students in 1912 to 64,486 students in 1925, but after this date, enrollment declined, and mirroring the fate of Boston’s continuation schools, collapsed with the onset of the Great Depression. Arthur G. Wirth, *Education in the Technological Society: The Vocational-Liberal Studies Controversy in the Early Twentieth Century* (Scranton, PA: Intext Educational Publishers, 1972), 61; Hansen, “Caps and Gowns,” 648–51.

Boston’s city-level continuation school experiment was another example, and many of its classes were specifically “trade instruction” for those already working in the trades. Across the U.S. in the early 1920s, continuation schools grew rapidly, but the vast majority of continuation schools just offered general education rather than trade instruction. Franklin J. Keller, *Day Schools for Young Workers: the Organization and Management of Part-Time and Continuation Schools* (New York: The Century Co., 1924), xi–xii.

¹³¹ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1914*, 55-56, 207-208. Similar cooperative courses were authorized for Dorchester and East Boston, the two other high schools that had initially launched afternoon trade courses. *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1915*, 53.

¹³² W.B. Hunter, “Apprenticeship Training,” *Transactions of the American Foundrymen’s Association, Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting in Boston, Mass, Sept. 24-28, 1917* Vol 26, ed. A. O. Backert (Cleveland: AFA, 1918), 142, 640.

England Foundrymen Association, is exemplary in this regard.¹³³ It was one of the largest manufacturing companies in Boston, employing 1,500 workers in 1919. It had moved to Hyde Park from a smaller factory in Jamaica Plain in 1903, under the leadership of Eugene Foss, Sturtevant's son-in-law. Eugene Foss was politically a Republican but supported free trade with Canada, a traditionally Democratic position, and in 1910 he defected to the Democratic Party and was elected Governor of Massachusetts in 1911. As Governor, Foss took aggressive anti-labor positions, including sending twelve companies of the Massachusetts Militia to Lawrence during the textile workers' strike in 1912. In 1913, B. F. Sturtevant moved part of its operations to Canada (revealing the opportunism of Foss' free trade position) and labor unions at the Hyde Park plant threatened to strike. By 1914, he had alienated the labor-wing of the Democratic Party and left politics to return to manufacturing. It was during this year that the cooperative arrangement with the public schools was established.

Organized labor, not surprisingly, was critical of this new form of public industrial education. At a BCLU meeting in April of 1910, School Committee member David A. Ellis received "rapid fire" questions citing cases of children from trade schools replacing adult workers. At the same meeting, a public cooperative school in Fitchburg, similar to the one established in Hyde Park, came under sharp criticism by labor for "displacing men in shops." The vice president of the machinists union had claimed, "eighty members of our trade drew \$8 a week for eighteen months while their places were occupied by boys from this Fitchburg school."¹³⁴ At the subsequent meeting in May, Mrs. Frank W. Page, a leader in women's progressive circles including the Boston Housewives League, called the entire system of industrial education in the public schools a "deliberate plan to 'peasantize' the children of working classes and provide cheap workmen with but

¹³³ "New England Foundrymen's Association," *The Iron Age*, December 7, 1903, 7; *Transactions of the American Foundrymen's Association 1917*, 640

¹³⁴ "Training for Work Urged," *Boston Daily Globe*, April 25, 1910, 2.

a smattering of a trade.” As she explained: “If a strike occurs, well, you can’t expect the school to shut down or to ask the employers to cease employing these pupils or training them under their agreement with the school board. Certainly not. What is the result? Strike breakers, nothing else.”¹³⁵ She urged BCLU to form an advisory committee to attend school board meetings and vocalize their concerns. When the Chamber of Commerce created their advisory committee to the Boston School Committee in 1911, the BCLU voted to create an advisory board of 25 members to regularly attend school board meetings.¹³⁶ A few months later they voted that their educational committee investigate the vocational work in the Boston public schools and endorsed their recommendations to increase labor representation on the school committee and ensure stricter oversight of the industrial schools.¹³⁷ Between 1911 and 1916, the BCLU campaigned extensively for labor representatives on the Boston school committee to ensure this oversight.¹³⁸

The opposition from labor unions helped push public industrial education, with the exception of women’s trade education, away from specific trade training. Without leadership or instruction from tradesmen themselves, public industrial education was still principally led by teachers with academic backgrounds and inclinations. Specific industrial training was also marginalized as the public educational system developed, structured by its own academic hierarchy from the primary grades to high school. Frank Thomson, who had imagined all school programs to be equally valid and valuable, had worked with the philanthropic Vocation Bureau of Boston to oversee the placement of “vocational counselors” in every school and a new department of Vocational Guidance in 1915 that aimed to help students choose between the burgeoning new

¹³⁵ “Mrs. Page Assails Trade Teaching,” *The Boston Herald*, May 16, 1910, 3.

¹³⁶ “To Advise on School Policy,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Jan 25, 1911, 11.

¹³⁷ “CLU Protest On Long Lease,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Jun 19, 1911, 14; “Larger School Board Favored,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb 5, 1911, 3.

¹³⁸ “Labor Going into School Campaign,” *Boston Daily Globe*, April 21, 1913, 5; “After Voice in School Board,” *Boston Daily Globe*, March 6, 1916, 5; “Praise Abrahams at Faneuil Hall Rally, Many Speakers Urge Him for School Board,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec 17, 1916, 16.

diversity of public schools and programs.¹³⁹ However, in practice, instead of equally valid and reputable options, industrial tracks became repositories for less academic or misbehaving children. Teachers and school officials encouraged elementary school students to take “pre-vocational courses” not because of interest in industrial subjects, but because they were rowdy or struggling with academic work. In Quincy, boys were selected for industrial class because “their conduct and interest in school was unsatisfactory.” It was hoped “that they would be induced to remain in school until they had received more academic knowledge, and some industrial training.”¹⁴⁰ Some educators fiercely resisted, and resented, the second-class status of manual subjects, such as assistant superintendent John C. Brodhead, in charge of manual and domestic arts in 1922, who wrote, “There is a tendency on the part of some teachers and principals to place [manual training] on a lower level than the purely academic subjects, forgetting that many pupils fully capable of pursuing abstract work, prefer to become educated...by thinking and doing concurrently.”¹⁴¹ However, these pleas had little impact. Industrial classes typically became repositories for those who were not succeeding academically, mapping onto racial and class-based hierarchies within the school.

Despite the hopes of many reformers, public industrial training did not become a successful form of certification for trade training. Unions resisted formal certification of trade skills that undercut their control, and hindered a coordinated industrial certification program from developing

¹³⁹ Reformer Frank Parsons founded the Vocation Bureau of Boston in 1907 within the settlement house, Civic Service House, and helped develop a training program for vocational counselors. After Parson’s death in 1908, Meyer Bloomfield replaced him and forged a partnership with the Boston Public Schools, so that by 1910, each elementary and high school in the city had a counselor. It was at the 1910 meeting of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education that Meyer Bloomfield organized the first National Conference of Vocational Guidance, and helped found the National Vocational Guidance Association two years later. Frank V. Thompson, “Vocational Guidance in Boston,” *The School Review*, 23, 2 (February 1915), 105-112.; Meyer Bloomfield and Frederick J. Allen, *Vocational Guidance and the Work of the Vocation Bureau of Boston* (Boston: Vocation Bureau, 1915), 15; Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy*, 80.; Ginn, “Vocational Guidance in the Boston Public Schools,” *The Vocational Guidance Magazine*, 3, 1 (October, 1924), 3. For an explanation of the consolidation of the Department of Vocational Guidance and the Boston Placement Bureau, see Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent* (1916), 85.

¹⁴⁰ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1910*, 66-67.

¹⁴¹ Citing pragmatist philosopher William James, Brodhead stated, “Good thinking had commonly been the result of good performance, and...good thinking not followed by performance is demoralizing.” Burke, *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1922*, 58.

on a larger scale. The conflict over training encouraged employers to seek alternative strategies that would reduce their reliance on trained (and especially unionized) artisans. As industrial schools were pushed away from directly applicable trade training, they became the repository for students who were deemed unsuccessful in their academic work, perpetuating their negative reputation among both students and prospective employers. Young men and women increasingly turned away from the trades as future employment options, and instead chose academic or commercial courses that would help them enter the growing sector of white-collar work. Figure 3.6 and 3.7 depict the total attendance in public day high schools, by type of course, for men and women. English and commercial courses, including reading, writing, bookkeeping, and typewriting, were vastly more popular than industrial courses.¹⁴² Similarly, evening schools depicted in Figure 3.8 primarily functioned as commercial schools. Industrial changes in the workplace and education thus fueled a cyclical “race to the bottom” in industrial training. These trends were accelerated, and consolidated, in the 1920s and 1930s.

¹⁴² These charts are based on data from the Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools that list attendance by type of school. The “Industrial” curriculum indicates those who attended specialized trade schools, such as the Mechanic Arts High School or the Boston Trade School. “Commercial” refers to those students who took at least one commercial subject in high school, or attended specialized commercial schools like the High School of Commerce or Boston Clerical School. The “English” curriculum included modern languages and was the more common academic curriculum offered in the central and district High Schools. The “Classical” curriculum was intended for those preparing for college, and included those who enrolled in one of Boston’s Latin Schools. Evening School reports listed total commercial and total industrial enrollment. *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1880-1940*.

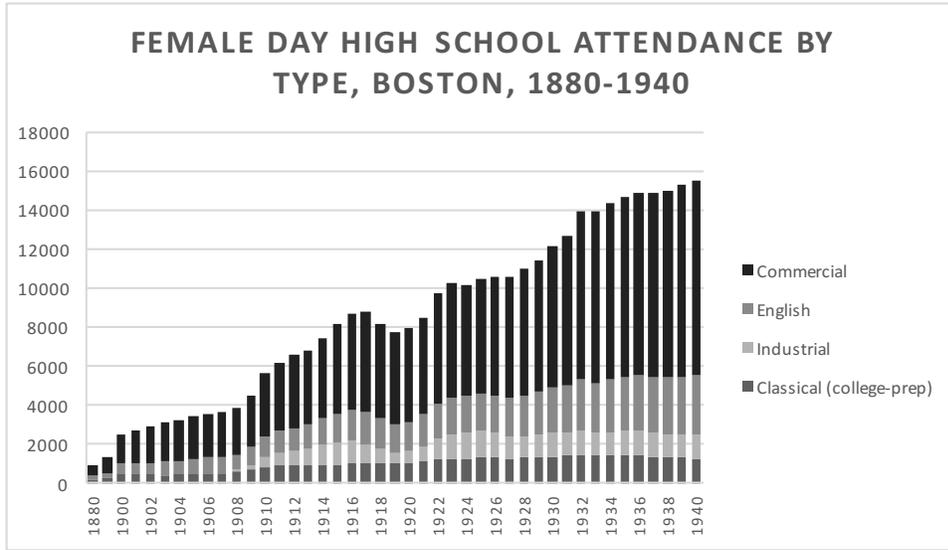


Figure 3.6

Sources: Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1880-1940.

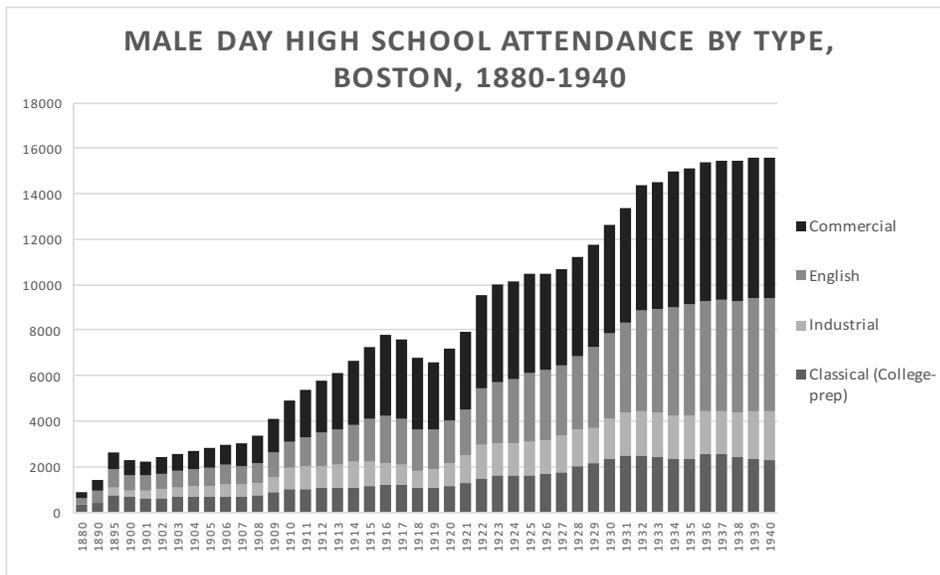


Figure 3.7

Sources: Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1880-1940.

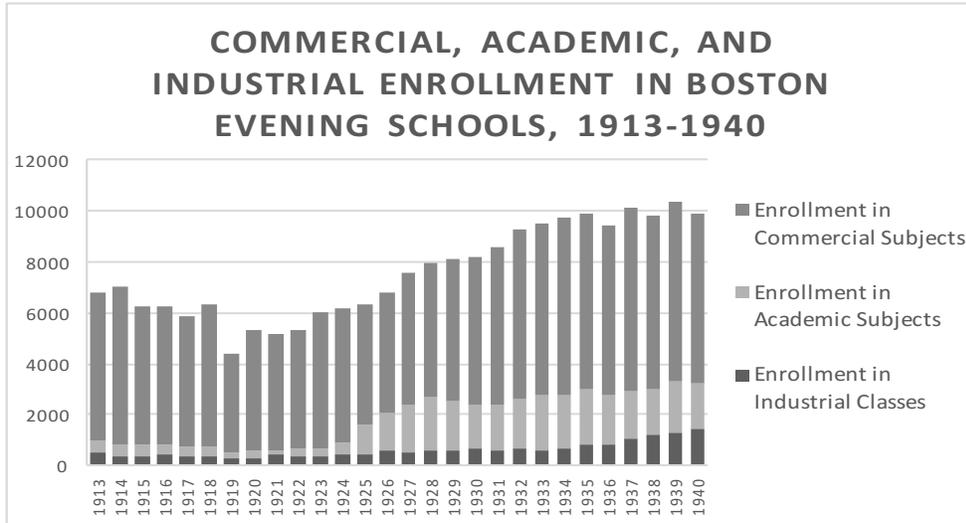


Figure 3.8

Sources: *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools*, 1880-1940.

Wartime Boom, Open Shop, and the Great Depression

U.S. entry into the First World War led to a surge of economic production throughout the nation, including Boston. A coordinated wartime industry and full employment gave organized labor renewed strength, as depicted in Figure 3.9, but also took place in an environment in which the rhetoric of patriotism and sacrifice could be turned against labor demands.¹⁴³ To keep up with production requirements, employers developed new forms of streamlined on-the-job training programs. In the subsequent demobilization in 1919, a post-war rash of strikes encouraged more employers to adopt the personnel management strategies pioneered before the war, and double down on their open-shop drive, known as the American Plan. While the building trade unions remain strong, the craft metal trade unions suffered major losses in this period. School-based

¹⁴³ The labor union statistics for this and subsequent charts come from the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics, "Labor Organizations," *Annual Report of the Statistics of Labor*, (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1908 -1916); Department of Labor and Industries, "Statistics of Labor Organizations in Massachusetts," *Annual Report on Statistics of Labor* (Boston, 1916-1926); Department of Labor and Industries, "Directory of Labor Organizations in Massachusetts, with Statistics of Membership," *Annual Report on Statistics of Labor* (Boston: 1926-1945).

industrial training, through coordinated public advisory bodies or in areas with weak union control, persisted and even grew through the 1920s. However, after a wartime decline in enrollment, the 1920s witnessed another major high school boom. Employers increasingly relied on these schools for the training of the majority of their workers. For supervisory, consulting, and research positions in their own firms, employers develop closer relationships with advanced degree-granting engineering schools. These new arrangements perpetuated the divide between machine operatives that received some high school education followed by a few months of on-the-job training, and engineers and supervisors who attended colleges and universities. The Great Depression, which drove youth employment down and high school attendance up in the 1930s, consolidated these trends.

**PERCENTAGE OF BOSTON
WORKFORCE IN UNIONS, 1910-1950**

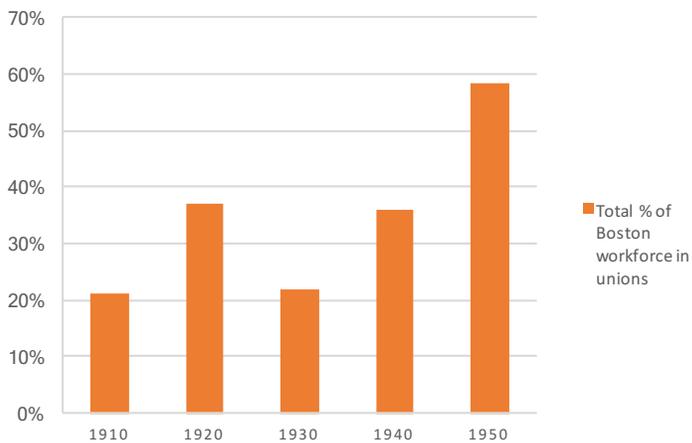


Figure 3.9

Sources: see note 143.

In the post-war open-shop offensive in the garment industry, employers pitted the male-dominated craft unions in the clothing industry against the female-dominated industrial unions. Already in 1913, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), an industrial union, had many more female members than its craft-union counterpart, the AFL-Affiliated

United Garment Workers. In 1914, at a convention of the United Garment Workers, delegates from Boston and New York split to form a new industrial union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union (ACWU), open to women and immigrants across skill level. By 1920, this new industrial

union had won contracts covering 6,500 Boston clothing workers, negotiated with Clothing Manufacturers Association (CMA) representing 75% of all clothing firms in Boston. This peak can be seen in Figure 3.10. But in December of 1920, the CMA locked the union workers out, leaving only two member firms that had agreements with the more conservative UGW (AFL-affiliated), unaffected.¹⁴⁴

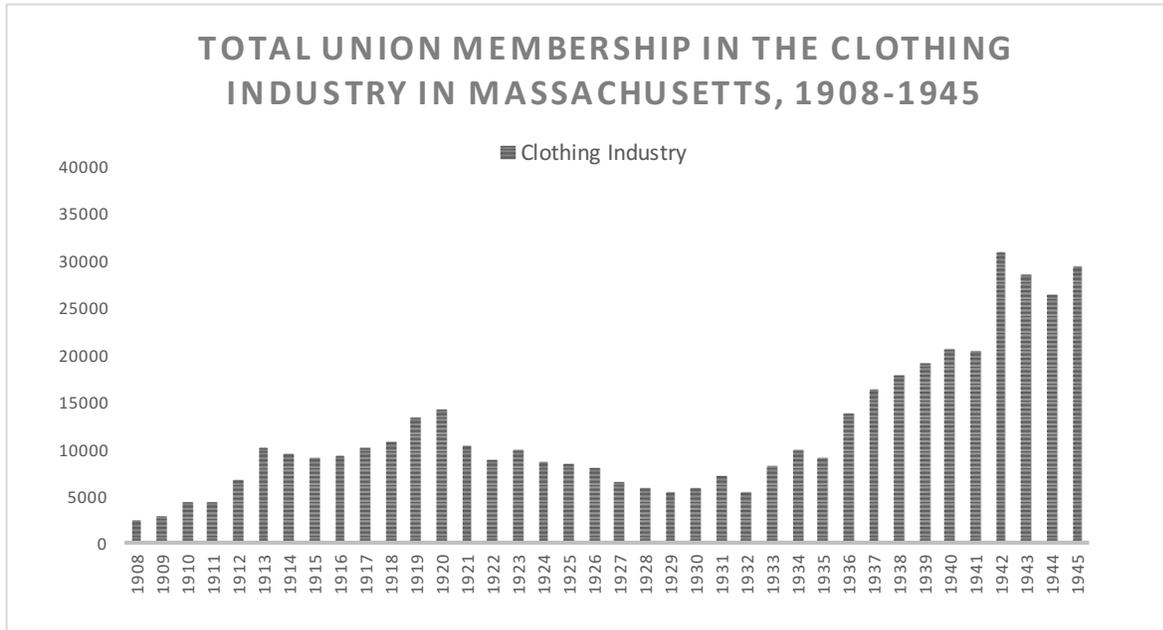


Figure 3.10

Sources: Labor Organizations in Massachusetts, 1908-1945.

The anti-union police, who had replaced Boston’s former police force after their failed unionization attempt in 1919, were extremely violent towards the striking clothing workers. The ACWU, with the support of the ILGWU, managed to reach a settlement with the CMA, but the union was forced to strike every six months to keep their gains over the next decades.¹⁴⁵ Employers capitalized on anti-

¹⁴⁴ “Clothing Makers Break with Union,” *New York Times*, Dec 7, 1920, 17.

¹⁴⁵ “Boston Clothing Status,” *Textile World Journal* 59,5 (January 29, 1921) 26; Tom Juravich, *Commonwealth of Toil: Chapters in the History of Massachusetts Workers and Their Unions* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 99.

immigrant sentiment to crack down on employees and maintained poor working conditions for their principally female garment workers.¹⁴⁶

The craft unions of the building trades more successfully maintained their power and training regulations through the 1920s, but lost some strength after the Great Depression, as can be seen in Figure 3.11. The building trades were the only sector that experienced rising rates of union membership in the 1920s, as depicted in the accompanying chart.¹⁴⁷ Their strength was to a large extent due to their strong political ties. James Curley, elected mayor of Boston in 1912, proved to be one of Boston trade union's most important advocates. At that time, Curley fostered ties with craft unions by launching major public works projects that employed union labor, including public transit and developing the South Boston beach line, as well as pushing pro-labor legislation and raising municipal salaries. Curley had supported Boston policemen, telephone operators, as well as construction workers during the wave of 1919 strikes, and in 1922 when reelected to office, he helped the United Building Trades Council, representing 35 building trade locals, negotiate a new closed shop agreement with the Building Trades Employers Association (BTEA). Curley also helped revive the building trades after the war through a new wave of public works projects, including enlarging the City Hospital and lengthening the blue line tunnel. Between 1922 and 1929, construction was one of the strongest sectors of Boston's economy.¹⁴⁸ Construction workers maintained their regulated apprenticeship process to gain entry to membership in a craft union.

¹⁴⁶ James R. Green and Hugh Carter Donahue, *Boston's Workers: A Labor History* (Boston: Boston Public Library, 1979), 103.

¹⁴⁷ Statistics for each industry are only available for the whole state of Massachusetts rather than just the city of Boston. While unionization rates in general in Boston were higher than the average in Massachusetts, the relative periods of growth and decline were likely very similar.

¹⁴⁸ Erlich, *With Our Hands*, 106–9; Roboff, *Boston's Labor Movement*, 17–19, 31–35; Ham, "Employment Relations in the Construction Industry of Boston.," 250–80.

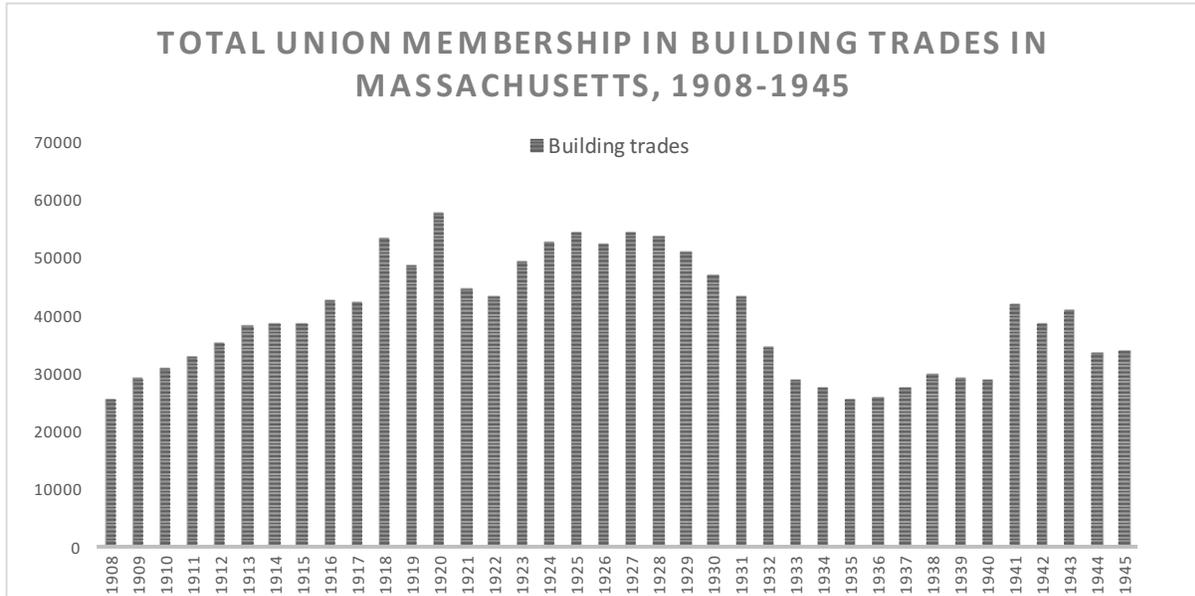


Figure 3.11

Sources: Labor Organizations in Massachusetts, 1908-1945.

In the wake of the Great Depression, however, the position of building craft unions weakened. In 1929, James Curley was elected for his third term as Mayor of Boston, and was elected Governor of Massachusetts in 1934. Curley, along with a broad swath of his Democratic political constituency, initially sought private solutions to alleviate unemployment before accepting large federal funds through the Civil Works and Public Works Administration. While providing much needed relief, the increasing role of the federal government raised a new threat to Boston's craft union and local political alliance. While Curley had hired union workers at union-scale wages for his public works projects, in 1936 the WPA implemented a policy that 90% of all WPA project employees must be drawn from the unemployed.¹⁴⁹ Many of these jobs went to Italian construction workers for the first time.¹⁵⁰ The building trade unions were deprived of their monopoly on public construction jobs, significantly weakening the strength of their political relationship. The building

¹⁴⁹ Erlich, *With Our Hands*, 127.

¹⁵⁰ Stephen Puleo, *The Boston Italians: A Story of Pride, Perseverance, and Paesani, from the Years of the Great Immigration to the Present Day* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 181.

trade unions revived slightly with a new construction boom in the late 1930s, and their control of apprenticeship persisted. However, as a proportion of the men's workforce, building tradesmen fell almost by half between 1930 and 1940 and their political preeminence was permanently weakened.

Rising industrial unions also challenged the power of the building trade's craft unions. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was first organized in 1935 at an AFL convention by, among others, leadership of the industrial garment workers unions, the ILGWU and ACWA. The CIO sought to organize the un-organized mass production industries. While the CIO reached greater successes in western states, it did spur the founding of new locals among Boston's service, government, utilities, gas, and chemical workers. Federal WPA employees were also among the earliest to organize with the CIO.¹⁵¹ Boston's metal and garment industries saw an immense rise in union membership in the next several decades, encompassing entire industries organizing across skill-level and racial and gender lines. In 1937, only 3 women were listed as belonging to a building trades union in Boston, compared to 27,247 men.¹⁵² Male carpenters and plumbers remained disproportionately Canadian and Irish. In new industrial unions, by contrast, male and female immigrant workers—mainly Italian and Russian—as well as African-American workers organized together. The power of these industrial unions would grow in mid-twentieth century and allow industrial workers to win significant improvements in their working conditions.

The metals industry also illustrates the shift from craft unions, almost eliminated during the open-shop movement of the 1920s, and the subsequent rise of industrial unions for the vast majority of employees after the Great Depression, depicted in Figure 3.12.¹⁵³ A production boom during WWI led a resurgent demand for trained machinists and mechanics, and also encouraged new

¹⁵¹ Roboff, *Boston's Labor Movement*, 46.

¹⁵² Department of Labor and Industries, "Thirty-Sixth Annual Directory of Labor Organizations on Massachusetts, 1937" Labor Bulletin No. 176 (Boston: 1937).

¹⁵³ The rise of metal union workers post-Great Depression were predominantly factory operatives in industrial unions, no longer machinists.

strategies to streamline the training process. In the 1920s, firms turned renewed attention to management strategies. Meyer Bloomfield, founder of the Vocational Guidance movement, helped found the National Association of Employment Managers in 1918, which merged with the National Association of Corporation Schools in 1922 to form the National Personnel Association (NPA), and subsequently the American Management Association (AMA). As described earlier, some management practices like internal transfers and promotion schemes functioned as direct substitutes for training.¹⁵⁴

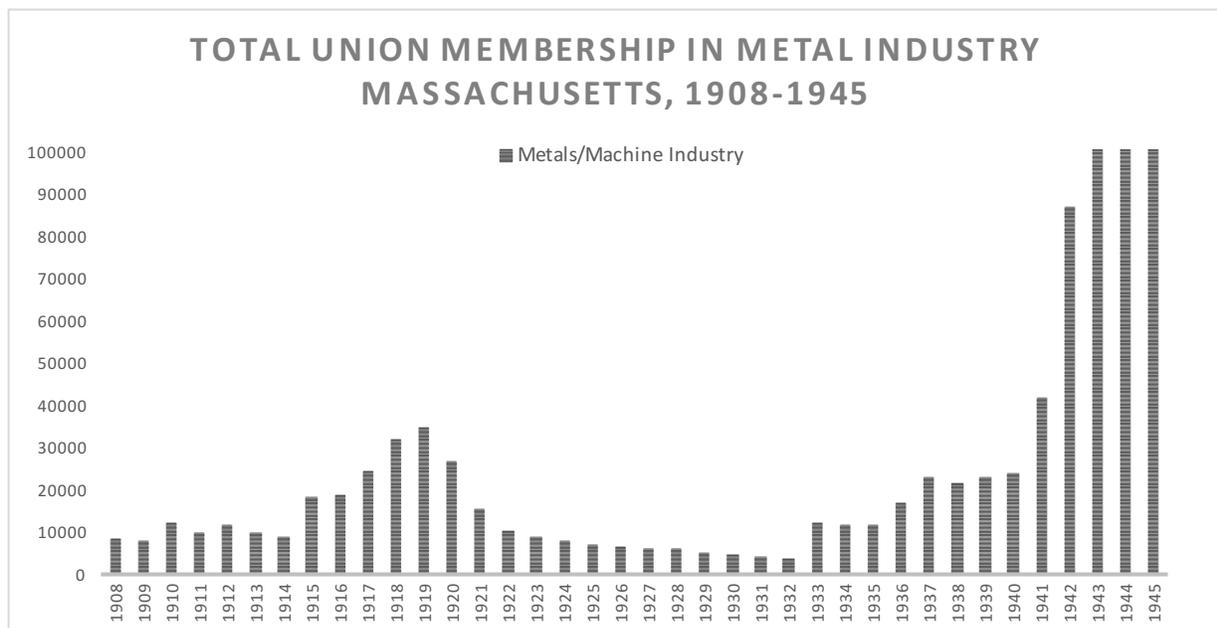


Figure 3.12

Sources: Labor Organizations in Massachusetts, 1908-1945.

By offering the possibility of advancement and encouraging employees to stay in the firm, these practices also helped foster loyal employees that would not be subject to labor agitation.

¹⁵⁴ The educational committee of the Dennison manufacturing company worked closely with the personnel department to coordinate these sorts of transfers: “[We rearrange] the job occasionally to provide educational advantages... The particular measures that have been used for this purpose include temporary transfer, rearrangement of responsibilities, the direction of an assistant, staff work, periodic conference with superiors, service upon committees, special research and development work... While thus engaged he has opportunities for self-expression and for obtaining the approval of his superiors for comparatively definite results. Economic interest leads him to cooperate willingly in doing these assignments.” Annual Report on Education Work 1927, p. 3, Box 180, Dennison Manufacturing Company Records, 1815-1990, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

For the new industrial workforce, training was divided into different institutional types for different sets of workers. During the wartime production of WWI, a new burst of corporation schools, or “vestibule schools,” had been opened. Unlike formal apprenticeship programs, these schools were primarily used to train specialist and machine operators in record time: training would typically last from 3 days to 3 months. During the Great Depression, companies implemented ever more speedy “learner plans” for the rapid training of new workers.¹⁵⁵

For a small number of machinists and mechanics, companies still relied on a long-term apprenticeship program. Most were not regulated by unions, but instead were long-term investments by firms, who hoped to groom loyal employees into future supervisors and managers. As such, these programs remained small, and in the crunch of the Great Depression, these training programs were among the first to be cut. The NMTA and New England Foundrymen’s Association discontinued their apprenticeship program in 1932.¹⁵⁶ Figure 3.13 depicts the decline of artisans in the metal trades (after the war-time spike) and the building trades as a proportion of the male workforce.

¹⁵⁵ Chas. J. Stillwell, “Fitting Men for Industry,” *Metal Trades Digest* 1, 9 (April 1, 1938) 15.

¹⁵⁶ Both advertised in Prospect Union Catalog in 1931-32; in 1932-33 both disappear. *Educational Opportunities of Greater Boston: Day and Evening Courses for Working Men and Women* (Cambridge: Prospect Union Educational Exchange, 1923), 145–46; *Educational Opportunities of Greater Boston: Day and Evening Courses for Working Men and Women* (Cambridge: Prospect Union Educational Exchange, 1933).

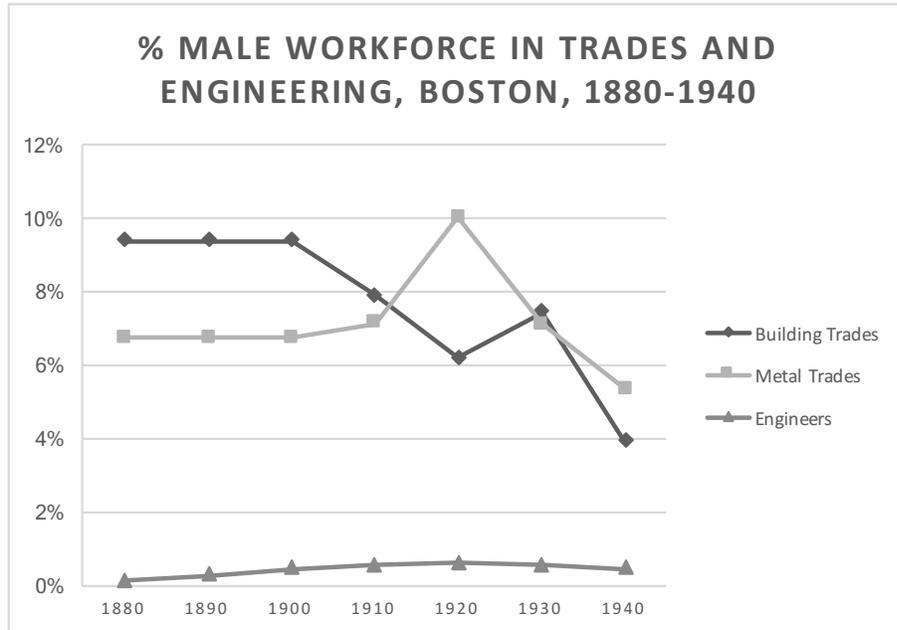


Figure 3.13

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

For the training of a small engineering elite, employers developed relationships with universities. At MIT, the 1920s marked a strong pivot toward industrial research and consulting in the “Technology Plan.” Before 1916, when MIT moved to its new Cambridge campus, it was known as “Boston Tech,” and had a modest reputation as a technical institute that prepared undergraduates to be future engineers and industrial managers.¹⁵⁷ Its total annual income was less than that of other small liberal arts colleges such as Smith or Vassar.¹⁵⁸ William H. Walker, chemistry professor, and Arthur D. Little, engineering consultant, advocated for a new vision of MIT that would forge closer ties to industry to propel MIT to the forefront of industrial research and applied science. Walker believed that theoretical science alone “produces a very badly deformed man,” and the best training

¹⁵⁷ Samuel Cate Prescott, *When M.I.T. was “Boston Tech,” 1861-1916* (Cambridge: Technology Press, 1954).

¹⁵⁸ John W. Servos, “The Industrial Relations of Science: Chemical Engineering at MIT, 1900-1939,” *Isis* 71, no. 4 (1980): 532.

for future engineers consisted of engaging directly with problems from industry.¹⁵⁹ In 1908 Walker established a Research Laboratory of Applied Chemistry that was staffed by MIT personnel and funded through research contracts with industrial companies and employers associations. Richard C. Maclaurian, President of MIT between 1909-1920, fostered these new industrial connections, especially among alumni. Funding from donors like George Eastman and T. Coleman Du Pont made possible MIT's new Cambridge campus move to Kendall Square, a center of industrial production in Cambridge.¹⁶⁰ Taking advantage of these industrial neighbors and their expensive machinery and materials, Walker helped establish a cooperative School of Chemical Engineering Practice in 1916, in which MIT undergrads spent part of their time in school and part in their partnered industrial plants.¹⁶¹ The war brought new financial pressures, and in 1920, Maclaurian named Walker director of a newly established Division of Industrial Cooperation and Research that would coordinate all industrial research and raise funds through new industrial contracts. Firms would pay a fee to MIT in exchange for the technical and consulting services of MIT graduates.¹⁶² As Walker described these contracts in a feature on "The Technology Plan": "the institute agrees in its contract to maintain a steady stream of trained men constantly flowing into industry with the best preparation for scientific work...at the same time, the results of research work thus obtained will swell the store of knowledge on which the scientific progress of the community as a whole depends."¹⁶³ Like a labor bureau, MIT would help companies find the appropriate graduates for the job at hand. "The institution undertakes to maintain a record of the qualifications, experience and special knowledge of its alumni; to advise the contractor where such knowledge and experience as it

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 535.

¹⁶⁰ Richard Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age: Universities in Massachusetts, 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 77.

¹⁶¹ Servos, "The Industrial Relations of Science," 536.

¹⁶² Ibid., 536-37.

¹⁶³ William H. Walker, "The Technology Plan," *Science* 51, no. 1319 (1920): 357-59.

seeks is available; to assist the contractor to obtain the technical help he requires, whether from its own alumni, or from available engineers elsewhere. While this service has been rendered to some degree in the past...it will now become a contractual obligation.”¹⁶⁴ The Technology Plan firmly committed MIT to the direct provision of trained engineers to serve the needs of industry. In the span of ten years between 1910 and 1920, undergraduate enrollment at MIT more than doubled from 1,470 to 3,139 students, and graduate students quadrupled, from 40 to 208.¹⁶⁵ Despite the relatively small overall proportion of engineers compared to artisans in Boston, MIT enrolled more

students than all other private trade schools, depicted in Figure 3.14. When the Depression hit, MIT's industrial partners cut their support for applied science, but new President Karl T. Compton helped forge new ties to research foundations and federal agencies

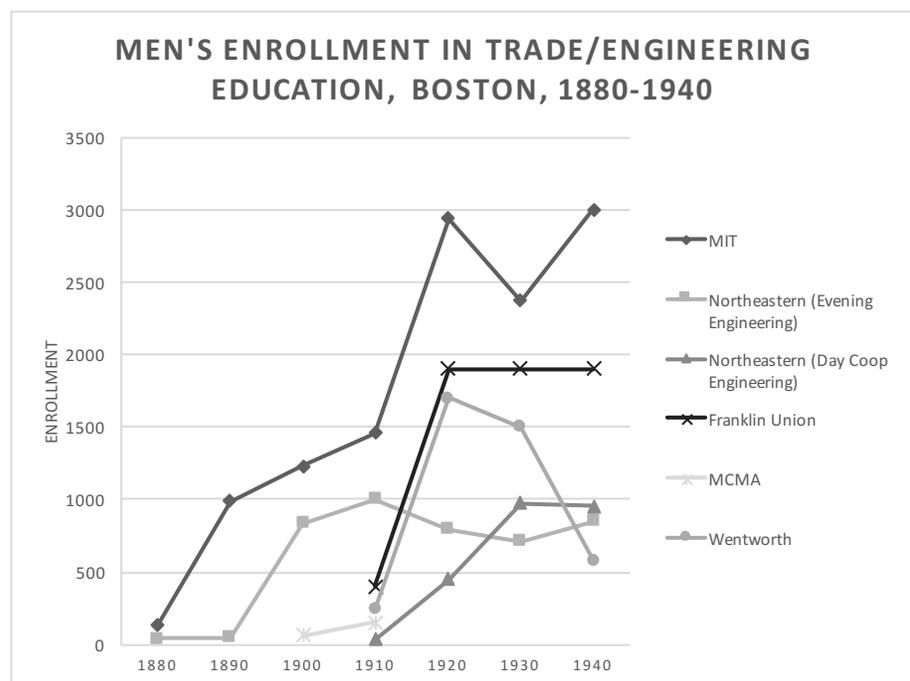


Figure 3.14

Sources: *Report of the Commissioner of Education* (Washington D.C: GPO) 1880-1910; *Biennial Survey of Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1920-30; *Proceedings of the MCMA annual meeting, 1910-1922*; *Annual Report of the Director of Franklin Union, 1909-1935*; *YMCA Evening Institute Catalog, 1895-1913*.

Note: This dataset is not complete, so some numbers are approximated.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1910, Vol II.* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911) 890-891; *Biennial Survey of Education, 1918-1920, Statistics* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1923) 337-338.

for scientific research grants.¹⁶⁶

As private institutions of higher education swelled in Boston, advocates for a free state university increased. The idea had strong support among labor unions. On April 14, 1905, in the midst of heated debate over the problems of existing industrial education institutions, Peter Collins of the electrical workers stated, “organized labor will have its own university of labor before long – one not dependent on false-natured philanthropists, such as Carnegie and Rockefeller.”¹⁶⁷ In 1913, the BCLU led a legislative initiative for establishing a branch of a Massachusetts state university in Boston.¹⁶⁸ The idea was also strongly supported by public school administrators, including Frank Thompson. While Thompson was always eager to boast of Boston’s leadership in educational policy, he pointed out its failure with respect to higher education: “All parts of the United States, except New England, and particularly Massachusetts, have extended the range of educational and democratic rights to include the college. The day has come in Massachusetts to agitate the larger educational rights of all young people.”¹⁶⁹ Thompson argued for an alternative system “which will furnish a greater variety of educational opportunities for the boys and girls who are today shut off from higher education through the present limited and to my mind, undemocratic method of selection set up by present college entrance requirements...”¹⁷⁰ Thompson believed higher education should be considered a guaranteed educational right, just as secondary education had come to be considered.

After the war, a state commission was established to investigate the matter of establishing a state university in Massachusetts, led by President of Boston University, Lemuel H. Murlin. The

¹⁶⁶ Servos, “The Industrial Relations of Science,” 12–18.; Roger L Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge: The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 177–82.

¹⁶⁷ “Trade Schools” *Boston Daily Globe*, April 15, 1905, 3.

¹⁶⁸ “Proposes Free State College,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Sep 8, 1913, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Thompson, *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1919*, 28.

¹⁷⁰ Thompson, *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1919*, 28.

commission also consisted of a representative from Boston College, several superintendents of schools in Massachusetts, a labor representative, and a general manager representing employers.¹⁷¹ Strong opposition, however, emerged from private university leaders, who claimed that a state university would be subject to corrupt political control, and that admission without examination would undermine college standards. Privately, they also feared that a free public university would be a direct competitor to their own institutions. Despite the strong support from public officials and labor leaders, existing private universities were instrumental in successfully blocking action on a state university until the mid-twentieth century.¹⁷²

The repeated setbacks to public higher education led the BCLU to found its own Boston Trade Union College in 1919, the first labor college in the U.S., growing directly out of the previous two decades' worth of political struggle over worker education and training.¹⁷³ Operating out of the High School for Practical Arts school building, the Boston Trade Union College offered free evening courses, consisting of 10 lectures delivered once per week, open to any union member or members of their immediate family. Dean of Harvard Law School Roscoe Pound, Harvard economist William Ripley, and Yale political economist Irving Fisher were among the college faculty.¹⁷⁴ In its first year, 200 students enrolled.¹⁷⁵ The school joined the Workers Education Bureau, founded in the U.S. in 1921 with support from the AFL, and within several years joined a wide network of labor colleges, such as the Rand School of Social Science and the Brookwood

¹⁷¹ "Will Consider State University Proposal" *Boston Daily Globe*, October 19, 1922, 15.

¹⁷² Ibid; "Speakers Favor State University," *Boston Daily Globe*, February 2, 1923, 13. Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age*, 37.

¹⁷³ As one announcement put it: "the Central Labor Union has concluded that a course in the hand, so to speak, is worth a curriculum in the dim future, and has therefore determined to set up its own privately-owned college without waiting for action by the State." "The Boston Trade Union College," *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* 21, 26 (April 3, 1919): 520.

¹⁷⁴ "Boston's New College, Open Next Week, The Only One of Its Kind," *Boston Daily Globe*, March 30, 1919, 52.

¹⁷⁵ "Trade Union College Opens Next Week" *Boston Daily Globe*, Sep 29, 1919, 11.

Workers' College in New York.¹⁷⁶ Like other Boston universities, the Boston Trade Union College catered to a small number and was never intended as a mass training institution. But it was a counterweight to the landscape of private colleges and universities in Boston that was overwhelmingly tied to large industrial donors, training the managers of a new industrial regime.¹⁷⁷

The vast majority of industrial workers, however, would never attend any institutions of higher education, even a labor college. Rather, they received general education in public schools. Public industrial education never had the major impact that its champions had hoped. In 1917, industrial education policy makers like David Snedden and Charles Prosser celebrated the passage of the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act, which provided federal subsidies for the salaries of teachers in vocational programs. Even with federal support, however, industrial education was still plagued by many of the same problems it had faced prior to the war.¹⁷⁸ Union opposition was heightened: in 1921, Boston unions blame the school committee for breaking a strike at the car shops of the NY, NH, and Hartford Railroad, one of the work sites of the Hyde Park High School cooperative students.¹⁷⁹ In 1929, a school survey undertaken with the cooperation of organized labor recommended the expansion of academic training, the restriction of shop courses for boys, reiterating again that “no attempt should be made actually to teach boys the fine points of trades.”¹⁸⁰ One of the greatest impacts of the Great Depression on young people was that they were put out of work, and the decreasing opportunity costs of attending school led to another boom in high school

¹⁷⁶ American Federation of Labor Department of Education, *Workers Education in the United States: Report of Proceedings First National Conference* (New York: Workers' Education Bureau of America, 1921).

¹⁷⁷ The Boston Trade Union College was forced to close in 1931, although it was revived as a more modest lecture series under the newly established Greater Boston Council for Workers Education in 1934. “Conference Plans to Educate Workers,” *Boston Daily Globe*, May 27, 1934, p. A7; “CLU Educational Courses Announced,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Jan 21, 1935;

¹⁷⁸ Martin, “Political Institutions and the Origins of Collective Skill Formation Systems.”

¹⁷⁹ “Watson and Hurley Clash at School Board Meeting,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec 23, 1930, 25.

¹⁸⁰ “Decrease in Boy’s ‘Shop’ Courses Urged,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Nov 19, 1929, 34.

enrollment, for children across all classes. The vast majority of this enrollment was not in industrial programs, but general public primary and high schools.

Despite employers' outward support for industrial education, evidence suggests that even they did not favor industrial school graduates over their counterparts in Latin or English high schools.¹⁸¹ Rather, employers preferred students from institutions associated with a higher status, preferable racial characteristics, and who possessed middle class cultural and behavioral traits. Industrial courses came to be associated with the undesirable "problem" child, who, as described in an employers' association journal, "can be no more successful in the industrial occupations than he is in school."¹⁸² Employers even began to include academic education in post-war "apprenticeship" training programs aimed at grooming future foremen and supervisors. The apprenticeship agreements that remained typically contained "class-room" components for several hours per week.¹⁸³ The NMTA-issued apprenticeship standards in 1926 required instruction in economics, civics, science, and mathematics, and allowed high school graduates to finish in fewer years than the standard 4-year apprenticeship.¹⁸⁴ Some employers, like the manager of Browne & Sharpe, actually pushed back against industrial education that came at the expense of general education. "It must be said of the schools that they are making an earnest effort to turn out a more usable product, but there are still some people who believe that considerable effort is being scattered on various shop exercises at a time when it should be concentrated for a better understanding of the

¹⁸¹ Hansen, "Caps and Gowns," 536–41; Horowitz, "The Metal Machining Trades in Philadelphia; an Occupational Survey," 42–66.

¹⁸² *The School, The Boy, and Industrial Employment* (Chicago: National Metal Trades Association, 1937), 4.

¹⁸³ The classroom components could be conducted within the company itself, or in conjunction with public or private schools. "The Apprentices are therefore enrolled under regular apprenticeship systems of several years duration, sometimes maintained and conducted by individual manufacturers, sometimes by special public or private trade schools, and often by both through joint supervision and management." *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ These standards were issued by the NMTA Committee on Industrial Education, a committee of four that included two representatives from Massachusetts: manager of Worthington Pump & Machinery Co. in East Cambridge, MA and manager of the Norton Company in Worcester, MA. National Metal Trades Association, *Apprenticeship in the Metal Trades*, 4th ed. (Chicago: NMTA, 1926), 11, 42.

fundamentals.”¹⁸⁵ These fundamentals were backed by trade journals and employment association periodicals.¹⁸⁶ In “The Question Box,” a section of the *Open Shop Review* where apprentices could write in their concerns, one apprentice complained about his dislike of school work: “One reason why I wanted to be an apprentice was to get away from school which I didn’t like...I became an apprentice as a steam fitter and now I must go to school four hours a week.... What is a trade that I can learn without school?” The editors responded with a definitive defense of school-based education. “We could tell you of many trades and places which provide so-called training without school work but it would not be fair to you because we believe that without school attendance, thorough trade training is impossible. It is possible to train a machine operator or a semi-skilled workman without school work, but school attendance is necessary for the training of a full fledged, all around mechanic.”¹⁸⁷ In the new industrialized world of the 1930s, even becoming an “all-around mechanic” required school-based education.

What exactly did general education offer industrial workers? Mathematical reasoning and logical thinking were primary. “The mechanic must learn not only to use his tools but also to make estimates and to plan work, to read complicated blue prints and to make calculations and measurements.”¹⁸⁸ Clear expression, reading and writing were also defended. “English is the subject which teaches you to express your thoughts clearly and forcibly and thereby to explain your ideas to others and to convince them if they think differently from you... Positions of responsibility call for men who can direct others and to direct others without a command of forceful language is

¹⁸⁵ J. E. Goss, “Modernized Apprenticeship,” *The Open Shop Review* 18,7 (July 1921) 255.

¹⁸⁶ “The Question Box,” *The Shop Review* (Sep 1929) 344.

¹⁸⁷ “The Question Box,” *The Shop Review* (Sep 1929) 344.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

practically impossible.”¹⁸⁹ In their annual report of 1927, the Education Committee of the Dennison Manufacturing Company explained:

If the individual’s powers of attention or analysis, or his imagination or resourcefulness can be bettered by a course in English literature, and those qualities are valuable to him in his work, we would not condemn such a course on the ground of inapplicability of subject matter to business pursuits. The direct relationship of subject matter to work is not the test we apply but rather ... its probable effect upon his habits of thought and action.¹⁹⁰

Dennison company records reveal that this stance was not merely rhetorical but born out in practice. The Education Committee maintained personnel files of Dennison employees from 1927-1930, containing the detailed educational and employment history of hundreds of employees. J. W. Reigel, the Education Manager, worked closely with personnel managers and heads of departments to develop personalized training programs, not for all employees, but specifically for managerial staff and “employees of promise.” The bulk of Dennison’s courses focused on reading, writing, and expression. R. F. McDonald was a machine operator who started at Dennison in 1921. After graduating from grammar school, McDonald had worked as a clerk, and then performed machine work in various factories before coming to Dennison. While there he enrolled in a two-year high school evening course through the Framingham public schools, consisting of English, arithmetic and penmanship, before taking three more years of English courses at Dennison. In 1927, when he first became Acting Foreman, he enrolled in “Report Writing” and was provided with regular written feedback from Reigel himself. Reigel encouraged McDonald to take English Composition and join a reading group. In 1929, his Works Report noted leadership qualities and his success in “arousing ambition and developing talent of leading employees,” and McDonald enrolled in a

¹⁸⁹ “The Question Box,” *The Shop Review* (August 1929) 304.

¹⁹⁰ “Annual Report on Education Work 1927,” 3-4, Box 180, Dennison Manufacturing Company Records, 1815-1990, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

Foremanship course the subsequent year.¹⁹¹ Another Dennison employee, C. A. Packham, had worked for 7 years at a conveyor company and taken several years of evening courses at Franklin Union, Wentworth Institute, and Syracuse University before starting at Dennison in 1927 as a research chemist. He enrolled in an Economics class and an English composition class at Dennison in 1928. In 1929, Reigel wrote: “I believe that Packham needs additional practice so far as expression is concerned...We suggest that he read and summarize from memory statements by persons as Lincoln, Franklin, Poe, or Stevenson. His reading should be done aloud.”¹⁹² These examples indicate the value placed on verbal and written communication skills, especially for selected employees with potential to rise up the ranks to foremen or supervisory positions, for whom firms could justify such a long-term and expensive investment.

Employers also saw a role for public schools in providing wider political and economic perspective, and inculcating the proper attitude towards labor conflict among faithful employees.

One employer argued in 1938:

One of the most important aspects of industrial training has to do with broadening the individual’s understanding of underlying economic processes, his role in an industrial civilization, and all the things which make for his security.... This is one of the all-important functions of the public educational system...It will open their eyes to the meaning of real wages, as compared with dollar measures; to the values of insurance, health, and recreation; and to the bearing of politic, taxation, and tariffs upon their jobs...Education along these lines can do more to stabilize labor than any other single factor.¹⁹³

This was an argument not for technical skills, but for a broad general and political education.

As public high schools grew and public industrial education stagnated, private trade schools were forced to either close or remake themselves into collegiate institutions for engineers. The

¹⁹¹ McDonald, R. F., Box 333, Dennison Manufacturing Company Records.

¹⁹² Packham, C. A., Box 333, Dennison Manufacturing Company Records.

¹⁹³ Chas. J. Stillwell, “Fitting Men for Industry,” *Metal Trades Digest* 1, 9 (April 1, 1938): 13.

MCMA Trade School, facing fast-paced technological change that rendered their equipment and courses out of date, was discontinued during the First World War, because, as the President explained, “There are many other schools in our city far better equipped for this work.”¹⁹⁴ They voted to use the money they did have for scholarships for students to attend other private technological institutes like MIT.¹⁹⁵ Franklin Union struggled financially through the 1920s and 1930s, but persevered with enrollment growth in WWII, and in 1953 was granted the power to grant associate, bachelors, and masters of science degrees by the state legislature as the Franklin Institute of Technology.¹⁹⁶ The YMCA Polytechnic Evening Institute also successfully morphed into a full-fledged university. By 1915, Northeastern College was incorporated with five day and evening schools, including its daytime Cooperative Engineering School and an Evening School of Engineering. In 1919, the Cooperative School of Engineering was authorized to grant Bachelor of Engineering degrees. By 1923, Northeastern College had changed its name to Northeastern University and had won, with some exceptions, general degree-granting power.¹⁹⁷ School-based training for industry grew into a credentialed ladder, with public high school for the majority, and university education for engineers.

¹⁹⁴ Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association, “Proceedings of the One-Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting, January 15, 1919,” (Boston: C.M. Barrows Company, 1919), 30.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ A 1928 headlines announced a “crisis,” and that the school would be forced “seriously curtail the activities of the union” unless a considerable amount of funding could be raised. “Franklin Union Facing Crisis,” *Boston Daily Globe*, June 3 1928, A4; *An Act Relating To The Membership Of And Further Defining the Corporate Powers of the Franklin Foundation*, 1953 Mass. Acts Chap. 0077.

¹⁹⁷ With the exception of the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, and the Medical degree. Degree-granting power was a political struggle among existing private colleges and universities in Boston, and will be described further in Chapter 5.

The Consolidation of Credentialed Hierarchy

By 1940, a new pattern of industrial training and employment had been forged. While some trades, like the building trades, maintained a regulated form of union apprenticeship, most employees attended several years of high school and then received short periods of technical training on the job. As the control of craft unions was weakened, the demographics of industrial workers changed. Immigrant women entered the clothing trades and operative positions in metal industries for the first time. Many of these workers would play an active role in the formation and growth of industrial unions after the Great Depression. But a gendered and racial hierarchy structured the workplace, with women and more recent immigrants performing the most monotonous and low-paid work, and their predominantly male superiors performing more complex tasks or in leadership roles. Some supervisors had worked their way up from the shop floor, but increasingly they trained at engineering colleges or universities. Companies multiplied their personnel staff and management experts to maintain industrial relations and the smooth operation of their manufacturing operations. A growing army of white-collar clerical staff, who performed the labor of these growing corporate bureaucracies, arose in parallel to the production process. It is to the training of these white-collar workers that we turn to in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Becoming White Collar: The Ambiguities of Success

Introduction

In June of 1912, several representatives from Boston department stores, the Women's Education and Industrial Union (WEIU), and public school officials met to discuss the launching of a new salesmanship program in the city school system. Myron W. Richardson, the headmaster of the Girls' High School, spoke. He noted that of the 2,100 girls registered at the school that fall, only 700 were enrolled in the academic course, while 1,400 were taking the clerical course. They were taking this course, he claimed, "because they hope to get something from the school which will help them in earning a living." This caused him a great deal of concern. The root of his concern was not the under-enrollment of the academic course; rather, he was concerned that "there will not be enough positions for these girls, and they will have to compete with the graduates of business colleges and other schools of the kind."¹ To address this situation, Richardson argued for the importance of practical courses that would train students for work beyond entry-level clerical positions. His observation, concern, and solution provide a window onto one of the most important chapters in the political and economic transformation of the early twentieth century: the training of a vast new white-collar workforce.

¹ Helen Rich Norton, *Department-Store Education: An Account of the Training Methods Developed at the Boston School of Salesmanship Under the Direction of Lucinda Wyman Prince*, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, No. 9 (Washington: Washington G. P. O., 1917), 60.

Over this period, what had been a small sector of predominantly white, native-born, male merchant assistants in small firms grew into a vast hierarchy of clerks, typists, stenographers, secretaries, and sales workers within corporations and the state, filled chiefly by women and second-generation immigrants. The classic historical accounts of the 1890-1920 period describe the bureaucratic restructuring of the economy and state and the rise of a new middle class, but have little to say about the evolution or role of training institutions on which the emergence of this new class depended.² More recent studies of American governance and capitalism similarly leave education almost entirely unmentioned.³ Conversely, most historians of education have focused on the institutional development of schooling in isolation from labor markets. When vocational training is invoked, it tends to refer to training for blue-collar jobs in the industrial workforce, rather than the vocational role of schools for white collar and professional work.⁴

In this chapter, I argue that the primary driver of the enormous expansion of schools in both the public and private sectors across the United States between 1880-1940 was the aspiration of

² Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

³ Fink devotes a chapter to the university intellectuals who shaped ideas about the American political economy, but does not look at the role of schools as training institutions. Leon Fink, *The Long Gilded Age: American Capitalism and the Lessons of a New World Order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

⁴ Some important exceptions are scholars such as John Rury, who argued in 1984 that commercial education “offered what was probably the period’s clearest example of the schools responding directly to the demands of the labor market.” Despite this bold statement, however, commercial education remains underexplored in educational history. John L. Rury, “Vocationalism for Home and Work: Women’s Education in the United States, 1880-1930,” *History of Education Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (April 1, 1984): 33. See also John L. Rury, *Education and Women’s Work: Female Schooling and the Division of Labor in Urban America, 1870-1930* (New York: State University of NY Press, 1991); Claudia Goldin, “America’s Graduation from High School: The Evolution and Spread of Secondary Schooling in the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Economic History* 58 (1998): 345–374. Both Goldin and Rury chart the dramatic expansion of white-collar work (in the Midwest in particular) and its connection to rising high school enrollment, however, their birds-eye-view account leaves much historical detail left to be uncovered. Most historians of education treat commercial education as a sub-plot in a male-oriented industrial education movement and the “vocationalization” of schools at the turn of the century. Herbert M. Kliebard, *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); James D. Anderson, Harvey Kantor, and David B. Tyack, *Work, Youth, and Schooling: Historical Perspectives on Vocationalism in American Education* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Harvey A. Kantor, *Learning to Earn: School, Work, and Vocational Reform in California, 1880-1930* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 140–48. As I argue in this and other chapters, while industrial education received much of the hype among reformers and policymakers, commercial education was in fact much more successful and significant in shaping the trajectory of American schooling.

entry into white-collar work. The vocational function of schooling, I argue, was not imposed by an economic elite, but a response to overwhelming grass-roots support for commercial education, especially among young women. Unlike industrial training, in which class conflict restricted school-based trade training, training for white-collar work lacked union opposition and was extremely popular across the political spectrum. In an unregulated landscape, the political conflict that emerged in this arena was *between* educational institutions competing for attendees. In cities across the country—from Boston to Atlanta and Chicago to Seattle—proprietary private “business” and “commercial” schools grew first.⁵ These schools—the predecessors of today’s for-profit schools—grew because they were offering useful and relatively inexpensive training for employment that students could not find in the public school system, or from which they were excluded due to gender, race, or high costs imposed by colleges and universities. As public pressure mounted for free alternatives, and public school administrators and university reformers increasingly accused proprietary schools of deceptive practices, for-profit schools were quickly replaced by an enormous expansion of public high schools. These secondary schools enabled the transformation of paths into the booming sector of white-collar employment from a primarily workplace-based apprenticeship model to a school-based model. The “human capital” that students acquired in these institutions was comprised of technical skills, social contacts, as well as a wide range of cultural, gendered, and class-based behavioral norms preferred by employers. By the end of this period, public high schools emerged triumphant as the training school for the vast majority of white-collar employees. For Northern and Western municipalities across the country, the largest single municipal expense in the early twentieth century was for public high schools, effectively acting as an enormous public subsidy for white-collar training on which the rise of the new middle class depended.⁶ Surprisingly, education

⁵ H. R. Bonner, *Private Commercial and Business Schools, 1917-1918*, Bulletin No. 47, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920).

⁶ *Report of the City Auditor of the City of Boston, 1910* (Boston: Printing Dept. 1910), 256; *Report of the City Auditor, 1930*,

for white-collar work received far less public attention than industrial training in the popular press of the time, a silence also reflected in subsequent historical scholarship. Perhaps because of how uncontroversial it was, as well as the fact that its primary constituents were women, this training revolution was a quiet one.

Like the changes in the industrial workforce, the transformation of white-collar training also had significant impact on the gender, racial, and ethnic structure of social inequality. Still classic portrayals such as C. Wright Mills' mid-century sociological portrait *White Collar* captures the anomie of the conformist yes-man, caught in a faceless, corporate bureaucracy.⁷ On the one hand, Mills' own portrait is historically problematic. While Mills devotes chapters to the "white-collar girls," his psychological portrait is definitively male.⁸ His portrayal also downplays the sense of achievement and success of many men and even more women who were able to "rise" from manual to white-collar jobs within one or two generations.⁹ At the same time, Mills' gloomy portrait also captured important characteristics of this expanding sector. Unlike unionized employees in the trades, from the start workers in this sector had little job control. Over the next decades, white-collar work mirrored many of the same developments in the industrial sector: mechanization, increased division of labor, and differentiation into a hierarchy of occupations. While many white women and second-generation immigrants used the education they received in schools to help support their families and enter higher-status work, these new female clerical and sales workers were paid less and were in more precarious positions than many factory workers. Worker organizing continued to be limited,

12-33, 317.

⁷ C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951).

⁸ Not only does Mills use the male pronoun for the majority of his discussion of white-collar workers, but gender inflects his diagnosis throughout. The "new Little Man" is paralyzed with fear and is "politically impotent." He has to perform the affective labor characteristic of womens' work: "he must smile and be affable" express traits of "courtesy, helpfulness, and kindness." Selling his personality in this way turns him into a "standardized loser." *Ibid.*, xvi–xvii.

⁹ Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1973), 93.

not only because of the real experience of mobility among many workers, but also because of the particular challenge of organizing a part-time contingent female staff, and the increasing strength of an ideology of educational merit and professionalism.¹⁰ The fastest growth sector of work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century came with least amount of job control for workers, shifting the balance of power to employers.

In addition, the growing differentiation of occupations within the business world, coupled with the unregulated institutional competition between schools, fueled a “race to the top” of educational credentials. As public schools channeled women into clerical and sales jobs, new private colleges and universities emerged to train a higher class of male managers. While the corporate leaders of the business world will be examined fully in the next chapter, the expansion of secondary schools proved a necessary precondition for the consolidation of a new credentialed managerial elite. Through the funding of public high schools, the state thus played a crucial role in providing the basis on which post-secondary institutions, and the managerial elite they trained, were built.

I will first sketch the overall economic and demographic transformation of white-collar work in Boston between 1880 and 1940. Next, I will examine the political landscape of training institutions between 1880-1917. While proprietary schools were first on the scene and met popular demand, they drew strong critics, including officials from public schools and elite universities, who moved in to compete with these institutions. Proprietary schools were soon eclipsed by the phenomenal expansion of public high schools. The “business curriculum” in these schools consisted of an array of technical, cultural, gender, and class-based skills as well as social contacts that proved beneficial in finding employment. The benefits offered by these educational institutions, however, operated within the confines of the labor market, and could not directly address racial or gendered

¹⁰ Jürgen Kocka, *White Collar Workers in America, 1890-1940: A Social-Political History in International Perspective* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980); Jerome P. Bjelopera, *City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 115–41.

discrimination or grievances within white-collar workplaces. These trends were consolidated after WWI. By the 1930s, public high schools had become mass institutions for female office and sales staff, and proprietary commercial schools were either put out of business or pressured to morph into post-secondary collegiate institutions themselves. The close relationship between schooling and white-collar work strengthened the ideology of education as social advancement. At the same time, within the broader occupational structure, the balance of power shifted upward toward a new professional managerial class at the top of the white-collar hierarchy.

Overview

In 1880 Boston, the sector that would later be called “white-collar” was a small segment of predominantly native-born men of Massachusetts or Northeastern heritage who worked as clerks in small stores or the counting rooms of merchants and manufacturers. Small shops, between 5-100 employees, were typically family enterprises in which owners made all financial, training, hiring and firing decisions. In the next decades, this period witnessed the rise of chain and department stores and large-scale corporations as well as the rapid growth of state bureaucracies.¹¹ Larger firms developed a stratified white-collar managerial hierarchy, including a managing board of directors and divisions of finance, personnel, merchandising, manufacturing, and advertising.¹² These growing bureaucracies were staffed by clerical and sales workers, occupations that grew dramatically nationwide and in Boston between 1880-1920. In the U.S. as a whole, clerical occupations grew from 160,000 to over 3 million; in Boston, 14,500 to 64,000.¹³ As Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show, clerical and

¹¹ Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*; Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand*.

¹² Lucile Eaves, *Training for Store Service* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1920), 19–23.

¹³ Data from the published U.S. Census, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920.

sales work grew rapidly as a sector of the paid labor force for men and women during this period: for men, from 15% to 25%, for women, from 6% to a peak of 40%.

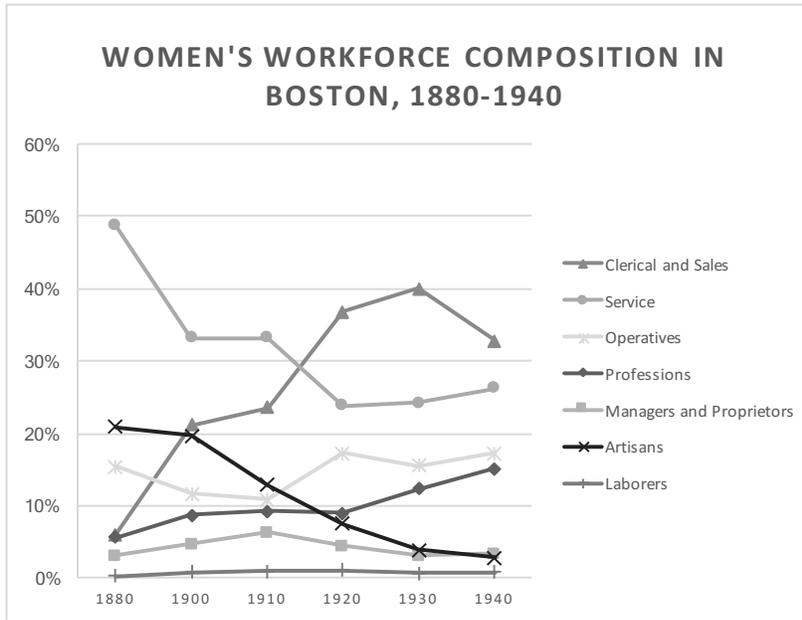


Figure 4.1

Sources: IPUMS 1880 100%, 1900 5%, 1910 1%, 1920 100%, 1930 100%, 1940 100%.

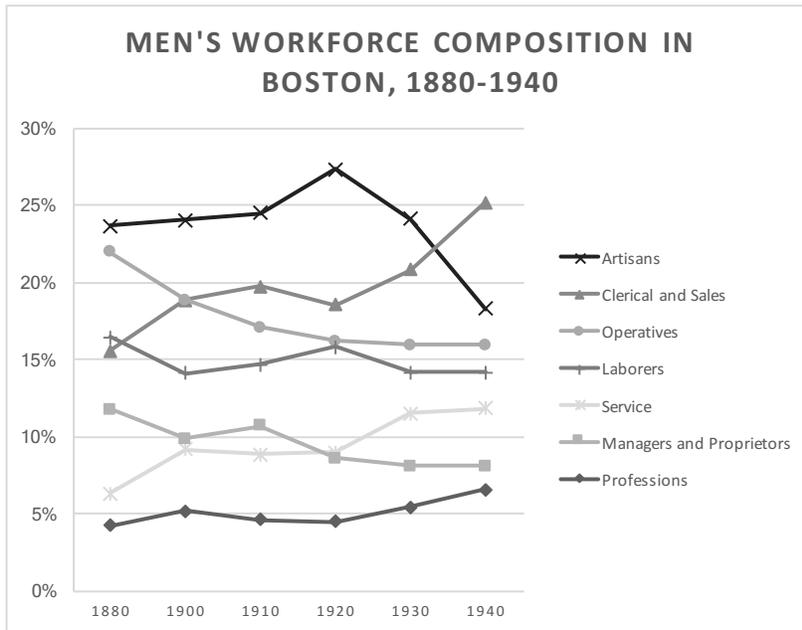


Figure 4.2

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

These were primarily young men and women right out of school: between 1900 and 1920, the majority of male office and sales workers were below the age of 30, and the majority of female office and sales workers were below the age of 25.¹⁴

The feminization of this sector stands out as a profound transformation as well. Figure 4.3 depicts the percentage of each occupation that is female from 1880-1940 in Boston, and these figures reflect nation-wide trends.¹⁵ Stenography and typing, the most common clerical occupations for women, transformed from 25% to nearly 100% female within two decades. This feminization began in Boston during the depression in the 1870s, when declining wages led middle-class men

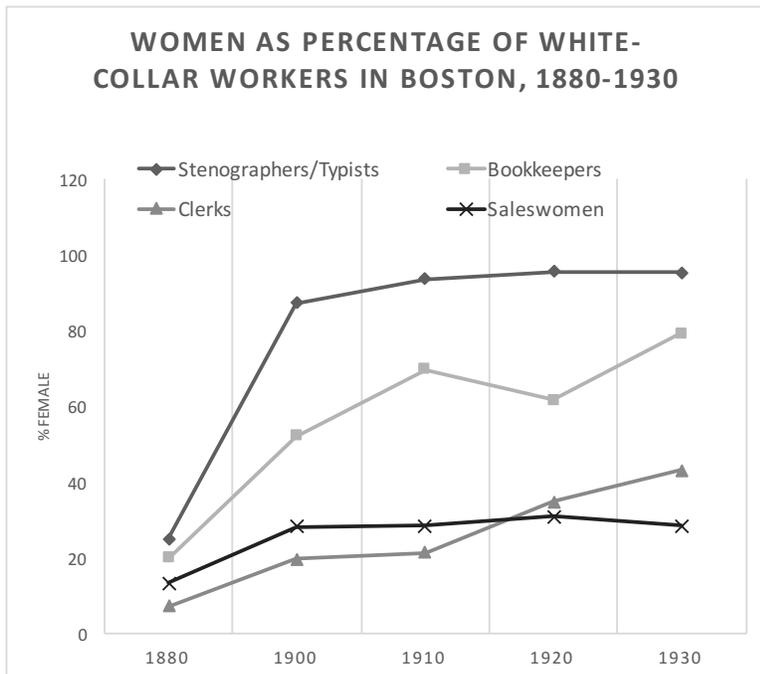


Figure 4.3

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1930.

¹⁴ IPUMS 1900, 1920.

¹⁵ In the U.S. as a whole, bookkeepers and accountants went from being 6% female in 1880 to nearly 50% female in 1920; stenographers and typists most dramatically from 4.5 in 1870 to 92% in 1920. Margery W. Davies, *Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), Appendix, 177-184.

¹⁶ Carole Srole, "A Position That God Has Not Particularly Assigned to Men': The Feminization of Clerical Work, Boston 1860-1915" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984), 118-22, 174-94.

who could afford it to remain in school, and led working class men, as conditions in the trades deteriorated as well, to enter white-collar work.¹⁶ Middle-class Northeastern women chose to go to work to supplement their family income in an occupation that was still relatively high status, as an alternative to teaching. In 1880, the single best predictor of women's

employment in this sector was the death or absence of a father.¹⁷ By 1900, more single women with intact families, especially the daughters of male artisans and clerical and sales workers, entered white-collar jobs.¹⁸ Women were not only attracted to the prospect of having more job stability, higher salaries, shorter working hours, and healthier and safer working conditions compared to alternative employment in teaching, factories, or domestic service work, but also to the higher chances of interacting with men and gaining upward mobility through marriage.¹⁹ Many worked only for a short time before marrying.²⁰ Employers hired women not only because they were cheaper, but also because they tended to be better educated.²¹ At the same time, many women were employed as operators of new machines (typewriters, telephone switchboard, cash registers) performing the most routine work, thus segregating the office along lines of gender.²² Large companies were the most highly feminized, as a more structured division of labor and delimited opportunities for advancement prevented women from competing with men.²³ By the turn of the century, cultural

¹⁷ Srole argues that this single factor was more important than the role of class, although she finds that class background had a significant impact on the likelihood of a father's death or absence. *Ibid.*, 327, 364, 389. Also see Louise Marion Bosworth, *The Living Wage of Women Workers: A Study of Incomes and Expenditures of Four Hundred and Fifty Women Workers in the City of Boston* (Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1911), 5.

¹⁸ Srole, "Feminization of Clerical Work," 431–34.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 550–79, 588.

²⁰ While the number of working married women increased during this period, they remained a small minority. In 1880, only 3% of married women (whose spouses was present in the household) were listed as having an occupation outside the home. By 1940, this percentage had increased to 13% of married women. These numbers were also low if we look at the composition of specific occupations: in 1880, 3% of saleswomen were married with a spouse present, growing to 17% of saleswomen in 1940. Of teachers, only 1.5% were married with a spouse present in 1880, rising to 9% by 1940. *IPUMS*, 1880-1940.

²¹ Srole, "Feminization of Clerical Work," 493.

²² Stephen Harlan Norwood, *Labor's Flaming Youth: Telephone Operators and Worker Militancy 1878-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 26.

²³ One 1920 study of young store workers in Boston notes this gender imbalance: while 70% of workers in grocery stores were men, 70% of those employed in department and dry goods stores were female. Eaves, *Training for Store Service*, 14–16.

tropes about the appropriateness of women in office jobs—comparing piano keys and typewriting, for instance—were normalized.²⁴

A clear occupational hierarchy distinguished office and sales work. “Clerks” was a term used in both, but the U.S. Census reporters distinguished between “clerks not in stores” and “sales clerks.” Office work, in large internal bureaucracies of corporations and the public sector, was more prestigious and typically better paid. At the lowest end were office girls and boys who performed simple errands. Copyists, clerks, and “typewriters”—the name of an occupation before it became the name of a machine—performed transcriptions; stenographers were responsible for taking dictations and correspondence. The highest female position was the secretary, although a select few might become managers or proprietors themselves. Men could advance to managerial and executive positions. After 1910 Irish men made significant inroads into clerical work, while it was only after the Great Depression that Irish, Russian Jewish, and Italian women entered the ranks of office workers in great numbers. Figures 4.4 to 4.8 depict “overrepresentation” by heritage for different female and male occupations between 1880 and 1940.²⁵

²⁴ Women were instructed to “strike the little keys just like piano keys.” “The First Woman Typewriter,” *The School Journal*, February 4, 1905, 138.

²⁵ “Overrepresentation” of a specific heritage group is calculated by subtracting the overall percentage of the Boston (male or female) workforce that belongs to that group, from their percentage in the specific occupation. In other words, if women of Massachusetts heritage made up 10% of the female labor force, but 30% of saleswomen, they would be overrepresented by 20%. MA= Massachusetts, NE=Northeast, which excludes MA and includes New York. “US” excludes the Northeast. “Heritage” is calculated based on whether or not that individual had either a mother or father from a foreign country. For the Massachusetts, Northeastern, and U.S. categories, heritage would mean that both parents are from that location. If a child had an Irish father and Massachusetts-born mother, that individual’s “heritage” would be Irish, for the purposes of this dissertation. Because “heritage” can only be measured back one generation, based on the census listing for mother and father’s place of birth, this metric only captures 2nd generation immigrants, not 3rd or 4th generation immigrants, and therefore likely underestimates their representation. I chose female stenographers as the sample here because they made up the largest single occupation of female office workers. *IPUMS*, 1880-1940.

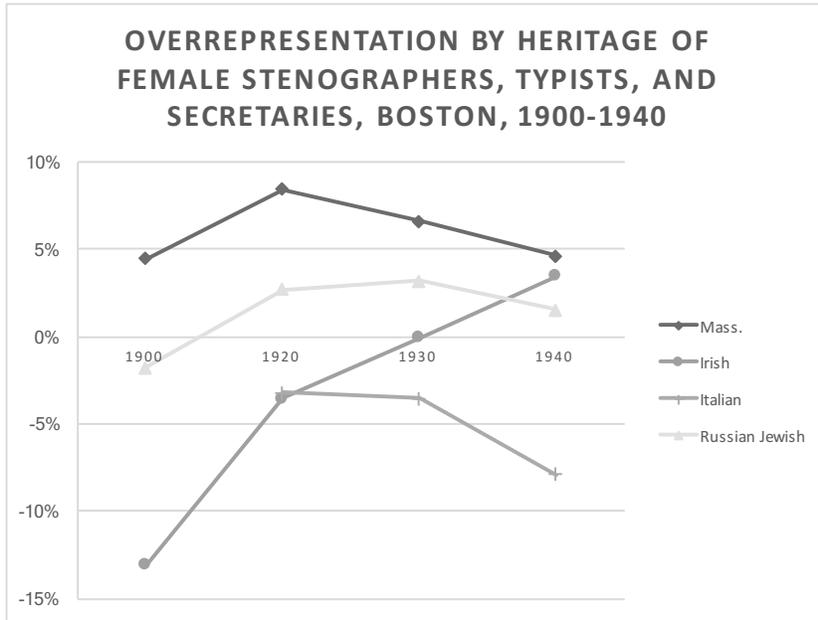


Figure 4.4

Sources: IPUMS 1900-1940.



Figure 4.5

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

Sales work was a lower-prestige field of white-collar employment. The department store rose with the garment industry as the small, custom dressmaking and suit shops of the nineteenth century declined. Alongside the industrial transformation of the clothing trades was the corresponding rise of a vast hierarchy of sales personnel. Likewise, as employment options for skilled female artisans declined, sales work held out more stable, higher-paying, healthier, and safer alternatives.²⁶ At the bottom were the cash, bundle, floor or errand girls and boys, who carried cash, sales slips, and purchased goods to a centralized office, “bundled” them, and then carried change and wrapped packages back to the customers.²⁷ Inspectors, examiners, checkers, and cashiers handled the money and checked sales slips and change for errors. Saleswomen and salesmen worked on the floor, often in specific departments, assisting customers. Travelling salesmen, also known as commercial travellers or “drummers,” were almost exclusively men. Floor managers supervised sales personnel. While similarly dominated by Northeasterners in the nineteenth century, by the early twentieth century a high proportion of both men and women sales workers were Russian Jews. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Jewish immigrants had begun as peddlers or small shopkeepers and worked up to become larger dealers, manufacturers, and managers. German Jewish immigrants founded many leading department stores, such as R. H. Macy & Co. in New York and Filene’s Sons & Co. in Boston, and their large presence in the clothing industry facilitated the entry of Russian Jews into the same sector after the turn of the century.²⁸

²⁶ Srole, “Feminization of Clerical Work,” 580–89.

²⁷ New technologies were adapted to systematize this sales process: some stores developed overhead trolleys systems by which baskets of merchandise and cash carriers were delivered and returned from central offices. Some Boston stores developed an elaborate pneumatic tube system of cash carriers. These devices were largely displaced by the cash register around WWI. Eaves, *Training for Store Service*, 57–61.

²⁸ Braverman notes significant tensions between the German and Russian Jews in Boston, but argues that by 1900 Boston Jews had developed a closer sense of religious identity, complete with a range of religious schools and philanthropic institutions. William A. Braverman, “The Emergence of a Unified Community, 1880-1917” in Jonathan D. Sarna, Ellen Smith, and Scott-Martin Kosofsky, *The Jews of Boston* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 65–87.

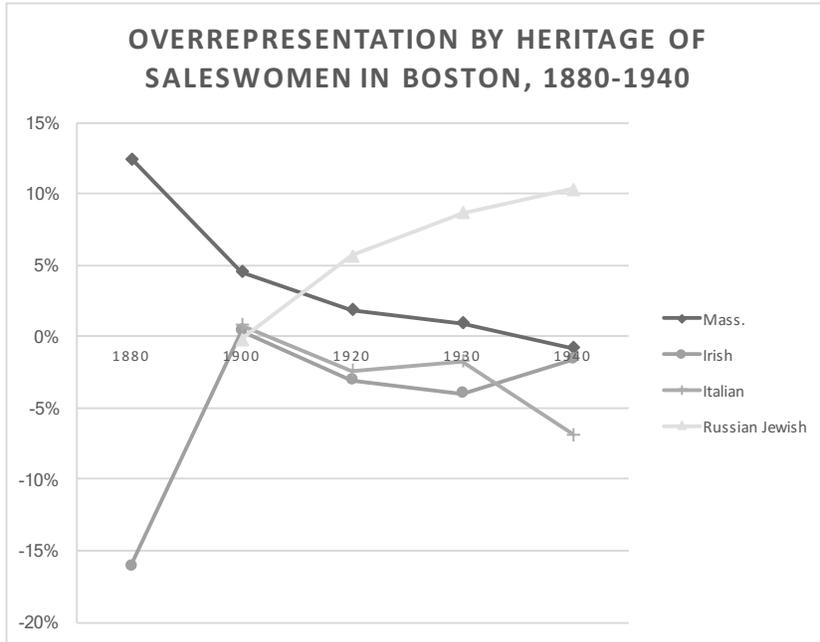


Figure 4.6

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

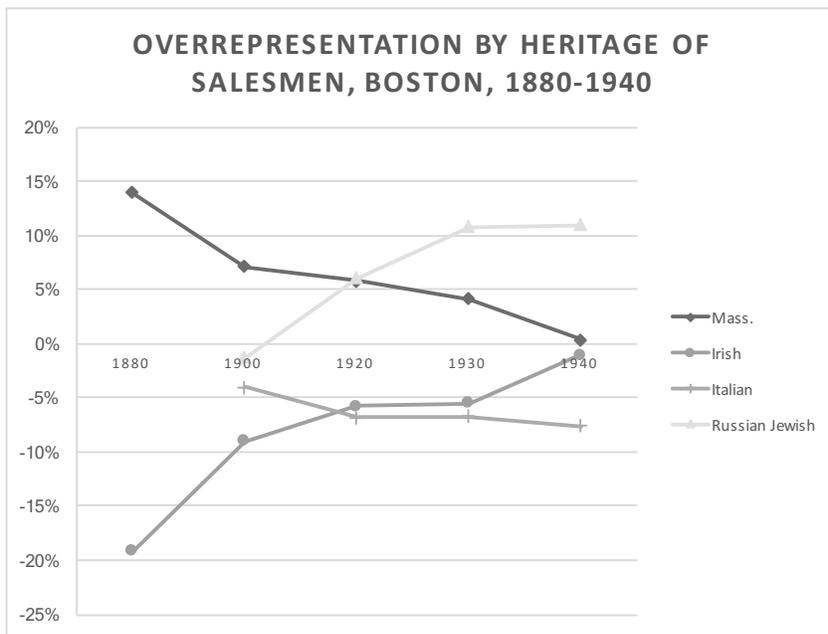


Figure 4.7

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

A range of new white-collar positions emerged in the new communications industries, including telegraph and telephone operators. The earliest telephone companies employed young boys as telephone operators, but as telephone exchanges expanded they rapidly feminized and stratified into an occupational hierarchy of operators, supervisors, and chief operator in charge of the telephone exchange. Telephone operating was often compared to typing, but telephone exchanges were even faster-paced and more regulated than most offices.²⁹ The “Bell system,” a national network of regional subsidiaries of American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T), implemented strict workplace policies. The standard time set for each call was 4 seconds, and each operator took hundreds of calls per hour. An operator had to use one of 115 set phrases in their conversation with subscribers. Supervisors stood watching over operators during their shifts, and the main Boston exchange was equipped with an observation board so that a “monitor” could plug into any operator’s call in any of the city’s seven central exchanges without her knowledge.³⁰ Boston telephone operators were overwhelmingly young Irish women, and, as we will see, had the most success unionizing before World War I.³¹

²⁹ “As the typist must learn the typewriter keyboard, so the telephone operator must learn the switch-board multiple. Each, by practice and experience, develops dexterity, accuracy, and speed in performing simple manual operations.” As described in 1912: “...a long row of young women seated in a dim radiance on a long row of precisely similar stools, before a long apparatus of holes and plugs and pieces of elastic cord, all extremely intent...One saw at once that none of these young women had a single moment to spare; they were all involved in the tremendous machine, part of it, keeping pace with it and in it, not daring to take their eyes off it for an instant.” Norwood, *Labor’s Flaming Youth*, 26, 34.

³⁰ “There is possibly no woman in any industry whose remissness is more instantly checked by the incisive action of an overseer than the telephone operator.” *Ibid.*, 28–38.

³¹ Telephone operators as an occupation category was so small before 1920 that the IPUMS samples from 1880-1910 are not large enough to provide useful data before then.

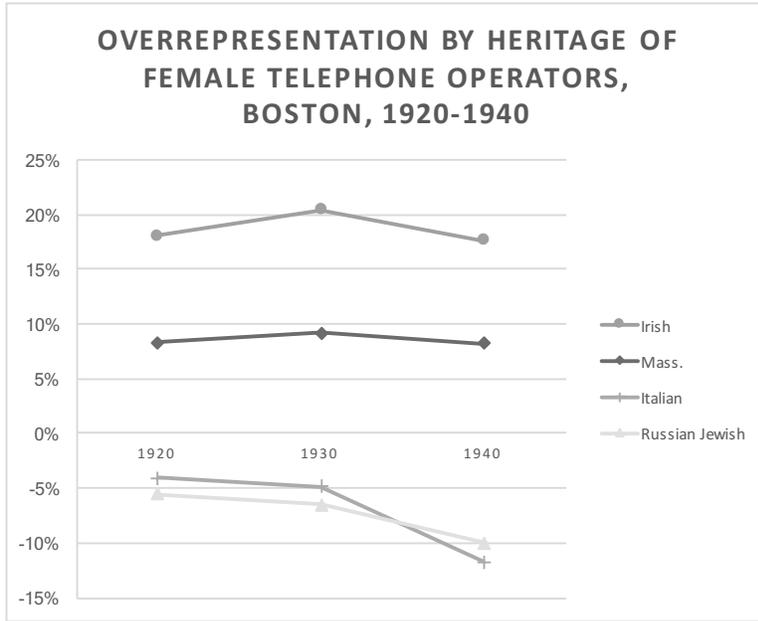


Figure 4.8

Sources: IPUMS 1920-1940.

Why did white-collar work experience such rapid growth? Some historians see the expansion of the corporate and public bureaucracies that employed these workers as the outcome of a logic of rationalization, following the most efficient structure of management. However, the U.S. pursued only one of multiple developmental paths, and the relative growth of this occupational sector was not inevitable. Numerous factors, including the difficulty of establishing a coordinated industrial training regime explored in chapter three, encouraged employers to pursue mass production industries. Another critical factor was the ready availability of a large labor pool of educated workers who possessed the relevant skills for white-collar work: literacy, numeracy, social skills, and middle-class behavioral norms. These predominantly young men and women received training for these occupations in new business training institutions, which experienced an unprecedented and unregulated expansion in cities across the United States. The city of Boston offers an exemplary vantage point to view this profound transformation.

Early Business Training in the Private and Public Sector: 1880-1900

Like training to become an artisan or professional in the nineteenth century, training for business involved an apprenticeship in a store or counting house under the guidance of a “master.” Unlike the trades, however, very few craft unions developed to regulate this training process.³² Multiple factors worked against craft unions in white-collar work. First, many clerks and bookkeepers viewed their position as a transitional job on the way to becoming a proprietor or partner. Secondly, the type of “skills” that would form the basis of their craft were not the sort that could be monopolized collectively: in addition to particular technical skills, clerks needed to earn the loyalty and trust of superiors who were responsible for their promotion. Some early white-collar unions did attempt to advocate for provisions on apprenticeship. The Retail Clerks International Protective Association (RCIPA), founded in 1890, supported apprenticeship legislation in 1891 and included a one-year “apprenticeship” as a prerequisite for membership, but by 1907 it struck down all mention of apprenticeship in its constitution and focused on securing a minimum wage for all retail workers.

By the late nineteenth century, the practice of mercantile apprenticeship faced similar challenges to those affecting trade apprenticeships. Larger firms made on-the-job training less personalized, less effective, and more costly. New training options emerged. Training for business had already been an established feature of Boston’s public schools, which, like private schools, altered their curriculum to reflect the vocational trajectories of their students. Grammar schools had offered English, reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic since the eighteenth century, and bookkeeping was added in the 1820s. The English High School, founded in 1821 as an alternative to

³² The early trials of local white-collar unions are exceptions that prove the rule. In Chicago, the National Union of Stenographers believed the primary problem with the profession of stenography was that “scab schools” were “turning out swarms of rats” every three months and depressing salaries. However, they were unsuccessful in their efforts to restrict entry. Lisa M. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 15.

the college-preparatory Latin High School, was in effect a commercial school, offering bookkeeping, algebra, trigonometry, and foreign languages, intended to fit boys “for all the departments of commercial life.”³³ Frank V. Thompson, author of a 1915 study on commercial education, wrote: “Commercial education was perhaps the first subject to be generally adopted by the high school as a concession to the public desire that the school should furnish preparation for vocations.”³⁴ In 1869 an Evening High School was opened as “a commercial school, for instruction in mathematics, bookkeeping, penmanship, and English composition,” primarily attended by male and female clerks and sales workers who worked during the day.³⁵

But as the market for the provision of training in bookkeeping, accounting, and penmanship grew, new entrepreneurs were eager to take advantage.³⁶ While a few business schools dotted the educational landscape of New England before the Civil War, a wave of proprietary business and “commercial” schools opened across the country in the late nineteenth century, and by 1890 enrolled far more students than those taking public commercial courses.³⁷ At a time before a standardized educational hierarchy, these schools occupied an unregulated space of secondary and tertiary education. Some had been originally established as seminaries, ladies finishing schools, college-preparatory schools, or denominational colleges that chose to add commercial subjects to

³³ Appendix, *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1858*, 150.

³⁴ Frank Victor Thompson, *Commercial Education in Public Secondary Schools* (Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: World Book Company, 1915), 14.

³⁵ Appendix, *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1880*, 21. According to its principal, in 1885 there were 1,400 students enrolled, and “Last winter we had one hundred and forty-seven clerks and forty-two office boys. Then there were salesmen, bookkeepers, machinists apprentices, printers, students, messengers, compositors, masons, cabinet makers, reporters, telegraphers, manufacturers, and canvassers.” The female students included “clerks, cashiers, librarians, copyists, students, teachers, [and tailoresses].” Henry William Blair, *Report of the Committee of the Senate Upon the Relations Between Labor and Capital*, vol. 3 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1885), 457. For course offerings and enrollment breakdown in the early years of the school, see *Semi-Annual School Committee Report, 1874*, 153-154.

³⁶ A process which, in turn, continued to weaken the possibilities of a craft union skill monopoly Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 66.

³⁷ Based on enrollment statistics gathered from the Reports of the Commissioner of Education and Annual Statistics of the Boston School Committee, 1880-1930. On similar national trends, see Leverett Samuel Lyon, *Education for Business* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 272-74.

their curriculum to boost enrollment.³⁸ Unlike trade schools, commercial schools had a low start-up cost and classroom instruction could be easily adapted for business subjects. Most importantly, there was high demand. These schools tended to attract middle class men and women who could afford to extend their schooling and pay for training, but who also did not have the social networks to enter business informally.³⁹ Schools cultivated relationships with local employers to strengthen their placement services. Demand was also fueled by extensive advertising campaigns in periodicals and business journals, a strategy pioneered by these proprietary schools that explicitly sold social mobility as a commodity. Many claimed to guarantee positions to their students, and filled their promotional catalogs with testimonials from successful graduates.⁴⁰

³⁸ For example, New Hampton Literary Institution and Commercial College in New Hampshire, New Haven Collegiate and Commercial Institute in Connecticut, and Maine Wesleyan Seminary & Female College all added commercial departments as a way of attracting more students. “New Haven Collegiate and Commercial Institute,” Small Broadside, Connecticut Historical Society Library; “Historical Sketch of the New Hampton Institute, 1876,” and “New Hampton Literary Institution and Commercial College Circular 1892” New Hampshire Historical Society; “Kent’s Hill Commercial College and Shorthand Institute Circular, 1885-6” Maine Historical Society; Hon. E. R. French, *History of the Maine Wesleyan Female Seminary* (Portland: Smith & Sale, 1919).

³⁹ Edwin Garfield Knepper, *History of Business Education in United States* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1941).

⁴⁰ *Twenty-Second Annual Prospectus of the Bryant & Stratton Commercial School 1882* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1882), 24; *How To Succeed: Annual Prospectus of the Burdett College of Business and Shorthand 1893* (Boston, 1893), 37-40, *Catalogue and Prospectus of Miss Pierce’s Shorthand School* (Boston: Miss Pierce’s Shorthand School, circa 1900), 11-35.

PRACTICAL BUSINESS PREPARATION. GET THE BEST.

Comer's Commercial College, BOSTON.

This MODEL INSTITUTION, conducted for *twenty-eight years past* by its FOUNDER and PRESIDENT,
GEORGE N. COMER, A. M.

And attended by upwards of *Fifteen Thousand Students*, possesses the confidence of the community, and has thereby peculiar facilities for providing suitable EMPLOYMENT for its Graduates, one or more of whom will be found in almost every mercantile house in Boston, with large numbers in other cities, while its NAUTICAL, ENGINEERING, DRAFTING, &c., *eleves* are distinguished in the Naval, Merchant, Military, and Civil Service throughout the world. FOREIGNERS, and persons whose early education has been neglected, have special attention. French, German, and Spanish spoken.

SEPARATE DEPARTMENT FOR LADIES.

NO CLASSES. Students (of all ages) receive individual instruction, and may enter at any time, DAY or EVENING.

VACATIONS, SICKNESS.

Arrangements can be made for vacations, if done upon entrance. Allowance made to Students who are taken sick if proper notice is given at the time so that a record may be kept of absence.

FOR SALE, WHOLESALE AND RETAIL.

COMER'S PENMANSHIP MADE EASY. Fifth Edition, Revised. Cloth, \$1.25
COMER'S BOOK-KEEPING RATIONALIZED. Forty-fourth Edition. Revised. Cloth, \$1.50. Blanks, 60 cents per set.
COMER'S NAVIGATION SIMPLIFIED. Cloth \$2.50.
COMER'S METALLIC PENS—The best ever made. Four numbers, from which all hands may be suited. \$1.25 per gross.
* * * CATALOGUES AND CIRCULARS, giving full information, with specimens of styles of Handwriting taught may be had FREE by mail or at the College,
No. 323 WASHINGTON STREET, CORNER WEST STREET.

Advertisement for Comer's College, *The Radical* Vol. 6 (Boston: S.H. Morse, December 1869)

Figure 4.9: Comer's Commercial College

One of Boston's first such commercial colleges was Comer's Mercantile and Nautical Institute, later Comer's Commercial College, founded in 1840 by an accountant and educational entrepreneur, George Nixon Comer. The college offered individualized

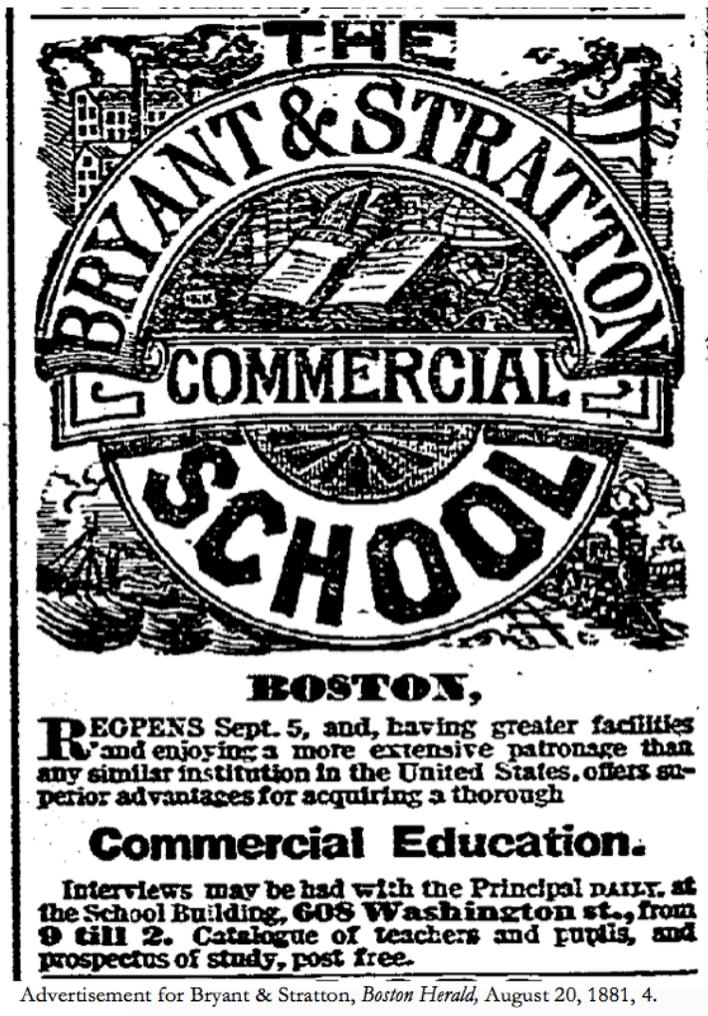
instruction in penmanship, correspondence,

bookkeeping, arithmetic, navigation, surveying, and advanced mathematics. In 1848 this school

opened a Ladies Department that prepared women for work as "Book-keepers, Cashiers,

Saleswomen, &c., in wholesale and retail stores, Banks, Insurance Offices, Registries of Deeds, Post

Offices.”⁴¹ Students could choose to enroll in a flexible combination of hours per day, week, or month, starting from \$5 for a standard week of instruction up to \$25 for a three-month course. In conjunction with his school, Comer published a series of textbooks on double-entry bookkeeping, navigation, and penmanship. His book *Writing Without A Master* in 1850, subtitled: “by which persons may instruct themselves in a beautiful and easy style of handwriting, so essential for business or correspondence, without the aid of a Master,” suggests the novelty of business instruction outside the typical form of learning as an apprentice under a “master.” The reputation of



THE BRYANT & STRATTON COMMERCIAL SCHOOL BOSTON,

REOPENS Sept. 5, and, having greater facilities and enjoying a more extensive patronage than any similar institution in the United States, offers superior advantages for acquiring a thorough

Commercial Education.

Interviews may be had with the Principal DAILY, at the School Building, 608 Washington st., from 9 till 2. Catalogue of teachers and pupils, and prospectus of study, post free.

Advertisement for Bryant & Stratton, *Boston Herald*, August 20, 1881, 4.

Figure 4.10: Bryant & Stratton Commercial School

⁴¹ *Annual Catalogue Comer's Commercial College* (Boston: Damrell & Moore, 1863), 11.

⁴² *Annual Catalog of Students Comer's Commercial College*, 1853.

this school was vouched for by prominent businessmen listed as “references” in the school’s annual registers. Based on their list of over 700 students in 1853, most students came from Boston and surrounding towns in Massachusetts, and only 5% were women.⁴² The school regularly updated its offerings – adding courses in banking, shorthand, English, and economics by the 1890s. By then, Comer’s enrolled about 400 students per year, nearly half women, and charged \$40 for a 10-week course and

\$140 for a full year of instruction.⁴³ Comer's had no educational prerequisites, and accepted many students directly from grammar school, but saw its institution as a professional school for business, "affording to them the same advantages of learning business that persons who are preparing a profession have at medical, divinity, or law schools."⁴⁴

Some of these schools were branches of national chains that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. Bryant & Stratton Commercial School opened its first location in Cleveland, Ohio in 1854, and spread to over 50 cities in the next decade, including Boston in 1868. By 1890, Bryant & Stratton was the largest commercial school in Boston, enrolling 600 men and 250 women in its exclusively day-time courses, charging \$40 per one term of 10 weeks; or a yearly rate of \$160.⁴⁵ Their promotional pamphlet explicitly advertised their institution as a way for students to make higher salaries:

When we find young men with only a few months' experience in the counting-room in receipt of salaries ranging from four hundred to six hundred dollar per year, and the average high-school boy receiving usually from one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars per year, at which price it is difficult to obtain employment without the aid of influential friends...the question is quickly asked 'By what means did the young man who receives the larger salary obtain his preferment?' His employer will answer at once that the person in question was carefully trained for his duties in a school where preparation for business was a specialty.⁴⁶

Like Comer's, Bryant and Stratton had no specific education pre-requisites, but claimed to stand "at the head of all the commercial schools in the world," outranking in enrollment numbers "the

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1-7; *Annual Catalogue Comer's Commercial College* 1896, 49; *Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1890*, 1462.

⁴⁴ *Annual Catalogue Comer's Commercial College* 1896, 7.

⁴⁵ H. E. Hibbard, *Twenty Years' Progress in Education* (Boston: Bryant & Stratton Commercial School, 1890), 26, 29.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

majority of the endowed colleges of the country,” and, in the world of business, comparable to “schools of divinity, law, and medicine.”⁴⁷

In the late nineteenth century, students who enrolled in these well-established commercial schools were predominantly middle class. While full year tuition fees approached those of colleges and universities, and were inaccessible to most working-class youth, a short course for \$40 was within the range of slightly higher family incomes. Cheaper alternatives also would continue to expand. Philanthropic and religious institutions offered some commercial courses. The Boston YMCA first organized classes for young men in penmanship and bookkeeping in the early 1870s, and continued to expand courses and add additional subjects such as phonography, banking, commercial arithmetic, shorthand, telegraphy and typewriting based on their popularity.⁴⁸ Some settlement houses offered classes in arithmetic and other common grammar school subjects in the late nineteenth century. Catholic high schools, although predominantly classical college-preparatory institutions, would also begin to offer commercial courses: in 1889, Boston College High School offered a commercial course including typewriting, stenography, and bookkeeping.⁴⁹

Proprietary Business Schools: 1900-1917

The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed the largest decade of growth for proprietary commercial schools in Boston, during which at least nineteen new institutions were founded. Figure

⁴⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁸ YMCA Reports 1869-87, Box 1, YMCA of Greater Boston Records; YMCA Prospecti, 1884-1902, Box 20, YMCA of Greater Boston Records, Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University, Boston, MA.

⁴⁹ David J. Loftus, *Boston College High School, 1863-1983* (Boston: Addison CGetchell, 1984), 21. Parochial schools only served a relatively small number seeking commercial education. Irish Catholics had strong representation on the Boston school board by the late nineteenth century and most Irish Catholics attended public schools. The parochial school system in Boston was almost entirely elementary schools. Only fairly well off Irish Catholics could afford to continue paying tuition through high school as well: in 1900, less than 2% of students in parochial schools were in grades ten through twelve. Most Catholics chose public high schools instead. Norwood, *Labor's Flaming Youth*, 16.

4.11 lists all private business and commercial schools in Boston, organized by founding dates. Advertisements for proprietary schools multiplied: in 1900, close to 9% of one the largest national advertising companies' ads were taken out by these educational institutions.⁵⁰ Established commercial colleges surged: Bryant & Stratton, the largest proprietary business school, grew from an annual enrollment of 850 in the 1890s to over 1,100 in 1925, and opened an impressive new school building adjacent to the Boston Public Gardens in 1903.⁵¹ In addition to the listed large establishments, dozens of smaller schools were founded, the majority no more than a single bookkeeper or stenographer who decided to tutor eager young acolytes for a price. Want Ads in Boston newspapers regularly listed training services: "Bookkeeping taught; accountants' private school will receive pupils day or evening. Phone Brookline 2518 J" or "Shorthand, Typewriting, Day or Eve, private teacher, \$1 a week; speed, dictation. Miss Herman, 170 Summer St., rm. 217."⁵² Some of these schools were correspondence schools, in which students would receive lessons, send back completed work, and receive written feedback through the mail.⁵³ These short, part-time courses were even more accessible to lower-middle class and even some working-class youth, many of whom enrolled for a few months after leaving grammar school before starting work.⁵⁴ This was

⁵⁰ According to Hower's study, 9% of ads were for schools and colleges total, the majority proprietary schools. Correspondence schools made up about one third of these advertisements nationally. Ralph M. Hower, *The History of an Advertising Agency: N. W. Ayer & Son at Work, 1869-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), 209–13.

⁵¹ *The Bryant & Stratton Commercial School – 60th Anniversary* (Boston, 1925); *Bryant & Stratton School* (Boston, 1927); *Bryant & Stratton Commercial School* (Boston, 1932); *Bryant & Stratton Graduates Who Are Making Good* (Boston, 1930).

⁵² Help Wanted, *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb 7, 1915, 31.

⁵³ Correspondence courses were more popular in rural areas and the western United States than cities in the Northeast, given the plethora of alternative physical institutions, but quite a few correspondence schools still served an urban populace. The International Correspondence Institute, one of the largest national correspondence schools, published lists of "all graduates and all students who have completed at least one third or more of their courses," by city. In 1905, over 200 names were listed for the city of Boston. The most common course was arithmetic: 96% of students began with this subject in 1905. The same year, the ICS faculty officers included two faculty instructors from MIT and one from Tufts College, who supervised instruction in advertising, telephone and telegraph engineering, and electrical engineering. International Correspondence Schools, *The I.C.S. System of Instruction by Mail and the Results Achieved* (Scranton, PA: International Textbook Co., 1905), iv, xiv, 53-56.

⁵⁴ This was the most common trajectory Bertha Stevens found in her detailed 1918 study of 1,682 youth under 21 years who had attended and left a private commercial school since 1913 in New York City. While the class background of these students varied, Stevens observed that in some schools, "the majority of [students] were poorly dressed and not

an unregulated field with opportunity for exploitation, but also indicative of the high demand for business training not met elsewhere.

Women were the primary drivers of this expansion of proprietary schools between 1890 and 1920: at Bryant and Stratton, for example, while male enrollment stayed constant at about 400-600 students annually between 1880 and 1920, female enrollment grew from 50 students to 800. Comer's College became majority female by 1905. The vast majority of new commercial schools were principally female from their founding.⁵⁵ While penmanship and bookkeeping had comprised the primary curriculum of early commercial schools, after 1900, shorthand took the forefront for the surge in aspiring female stenographers and secretaries, while a smaller number of male students took courses to become accountants, cashiers, and business managers. As many of these schools offered evening instruction, they catered to many young Irish and Russian Jewish students already working in offices and stores eager to improve their position. These schools pitched their three month, six month, or year-long courses to both grammar school graduates and high school graduates, offering a practical business training that would make their students highly desirable to future employers.⁵⁶

clean...[it appeared] a large portion of their lives was spent in the New York streets...most of them appeared to be foreign born or of foreign parentage." Bertha Morton Stevens, *Private Commercial Schools: Manhattan and the Bronx* (New York: Public Education Association, 1918), 22-25.

⁵⁵ *Report of the Commissioner of Education* (Washington D.C: GPO) 1880-1910; *Biennial Survey of Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1920-30.

⁵⁶ In 1896, Comer's catalog stated: "The best time for a student to take our commercial course is just after graduating from a Grammar School, although many who have plenty of time and wish a more finished English education take a High School course before entering [Comer's] College." They were also eager, however, to distinguish the training in their school from commercial courses offered in public high schools: "a commercial course there must of necessity be elementary, when we remember the tax upon the time and energy of both teachers and pupils imposed by the multiplicity of other studies that ordinarily constitute a high school course." Their school, by contrast, offered a "thorough business training." *Annual Prospectus Comer's Commercial College* (Boston: 1896), 34, 55. In 1900, Bryant and Stratton required students to have "an ordinary English education" and be at least 14 years of age. Herman Hibbard, *Thirty-Ninth Annual Prospectus of the Bryant & Stratton Commercial School 1900-1901* (Boston, 1901). In 1901, Miss Pierce's School of Shorthand targeted its school to those with a good common school education, as well as female school teachers "tired of the drudgery of public school teaching" who sought to make a transition into the business world. *Catalogue and Prospectus of Miss Pierce's Shorthand School* (Boston: Miss Pierce's Shorthand School, circa 1900), 3-5.

Private Business Schools and Programs by Date Founded	
Before 1900	
1838	Sawyer's Commercial College
1840	Comers Commercial College
1848	French's Mercantile College
1860	Bryant & Stratton Commercial School (closed 1975)
1870	Kendall's Practical Business School & Normal Writing Institute
1872	Eaton's Business College
1872	Boston Commercial College
1876	Reckers & Bradford Commercial School
1879	Hickox's Shorthand School
1879	Burdett Commercial College (closed 1999)
1880	Allen Institute
1883	Beale's Shorthand School
1884	W. H. Dillon Cambridge Shorthand School
1884	Franklin Academy
1886	Greenwood Finishing School of Shorthand and Typewriting
1893	Chandler Normal Shorthand School (closed 1979)
1895	Pernin School of Shorthand
1895	Miss Pierce's Shorthand School
1895	A.O. Hall's Business College
1896	Cheverus Commercial School (Parochial)
1899	Boston School of Telegraphy
After 1900	
1900	Benedict School of Shorthand
1900	Boston Typewriting and Reporting School
1900	Gregg School of Shorthand
1900	National Correspondence Institute
1900	Cutter's School of Shorthand
1900	International Correspondence Schools

Figure 4.11

Sources: *Report of the Commissioner of Education 1890* and the *Boston Directory* (Boston: Sampson, Murdock & Co.) 1885-1930.

1901	Pemberton School of Shorthand
1902	Simmon's College Secretarial Studies Program
1902	Forest Hall Academy of Shorthand
1903	Miller College of Advertising Arts
1903	Winter Hill Business College - Fisher Business College (1910) - Fisher Junior College (1952-)
1904	Massachusetts College of Commerce
1904	Pace Institute of Accounting
1905	Reddin School of Shorthand and Civil Service
1905	School of Successful Salesmanship, Inc.
1905	Lucinda Prince Salesmanship School - Simmons College (1913)
1905	YMCA Evening School of Commerce – Northeastern University (1922-)
1908	Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration
1909	American Institute of Banking - New England College of Business (2008-)
1913	Eastern Radio Institute
1913	Boston University School of Business Administration - Questrom School of Business (2015-)
1914	New England School of Telegraphy
1914	MIT Course XV Engineering Administration - Sloan School of Management (1938-)
1914	American School of Business, Inc.
1915	Clark School of Shorthand and Typewriting
1915	YWCA Commercial School
1915	Waldo's Boston Shorthand School
1916	Boston Calculating School
1916	Burrough's Adding Machine Company
1916	Higgins Commercial Machine School
1917	Bentley School of Accounting and Finance – Bentley University (1971-)
1917	Boston School for Secretaries -- Katharine Gibbs School (1920-2011)
1918	Boston School of Filing

Figure 4.11 (Continued)

1918	MacDonald Commercial School
1919	Boston University School of Secretarial Science – School of Practical Arts and Letters (1924-1955)
1919	MA Radio & Telegraph School
1920	Copley Business Institute
1920	Boyd Shorthand Institute
1921	Laskey Commercial College
1921	American Institute of Finance
1922	Northeastern Cooperative Business School - Graduate School of Business Administration (1952-)

Figure 4.11 (Continued)

Some students had very positive experiences at these schools. Testimonials collected and circulated by the schools themselves reveal how a selected group of students valued these institutions. Around the turn of the century, Harriet Benton, a student at Miss Pierce’s Shorthand school in Boston praised the quality of instruction in shorthand that allowed her to switch from public school teaching to a position as a private secretary for a minister. Phoebe McKenna, who was encouraged to learn shorthand and typewriting by her employer when she was employed as a bookkeeper, attended Miss Pierce’s Evening Classes, which successfully “enabled me to do their correspondence.” Lydia F. Brock used Miss Pierce’s shorthand course to prepare and pass the civil service examination, which allowed Lydia to obtain a position as a school committee assistant in Boston. Many students were grateful for the services of the school’s placement bureau that had placed them in their current positions. Jennie M. Ogston, who worked as a stenographer in the Exchange building in Boston, wrote: “[Miss Pierce] obtained the position I now have so that I did not have to wait even a day for one, and I feel that without her aid I should not have been able to find such a position.” Geneva Thompson felt “greatly indebted to Miss Pierce...for the excellent

position secured through her influence” as a stenographer for the Sea Coast Packing Company.⁵⁷ Graduates of Burdett College in Boston shared similar stories: A. W. Newhall wished to express his “gratitude” for the “kindness you showed me in assisting me to my present position as assistant bookkeeper for Gregory & Brown” in Boston. Arthur F. Adams, who attended Burdett for four months, thanked the school for, through their “kind influence,” obtaining his present position “in the National Bank of Redemption of Boston, which I like very much.”⁵⁸

These experiences, however, were by no means universal. Educational reformer Bertha Stevens conducted an extensive study of private commercial college students in New York in 1918, revealing a significant degree of dissatisfaction, likely shared by their counterparts in Boston. One student, Lena S., claimed of her school: “they skin you something fierce; they make girls stay on week after week by telling them that they did not pass the examinations.” Frances L. described how her school “makes too much profit on stationery and supplies; and that if one does not ‘watch out’ there are likely to be mistakes in the monthly bills to the student’s disadvantage.” Rose W. claimed “I didn’t like that school very well. I did not care much for the teachers; they did not pay any attention to you.” The mother of one student exclaimed, as transcribed by the interviewer: “All dat money, all dat money, and no help from de school! What dey do for you? Nothing.”⁵⁹

Stevens was one of a number of reformers who were critical of this growing sector of proprietary business schools. Already in 1899, President of Harvard Charles W. Eliot accused the unregulated field of commercial colleges of low standards and exploitation of working-class youth. He cited a 1898 study of New York’s business colleges that “found the state overrun with sham

⁵⁷ Given the range of possibilities, some students stressed the unique merits of their school: Ada Holbrook wrote that “I can truthfully say, with pleasure, that...after investigating the merits of many schools and colleges, I attended [Miss Pierce’s]”; Annie Savage described how the manager of a popular placement agency that received applicants from “every school in the city” said that he “could tell that I had received good training.” *Catalogue and Prospectus of Miss Pierce’s Shorthand School*, 12-15, 19-25, 30-33.

⁵⁸ *How To Succeed: Annual Prospectus of the Burdett College of Business and Shorthand 1893*, 34-36.

⁵⁹ Stevens, *Private Commercial Schools*, 72-74.

institutions...with few teachers, limited equipments [*sic*] and small room space, selling 'life scholarships' that... allowed a student to stay as long as he pleased, and do as little as he liked." This "multitude of humbugs...assumed and then outrageously abused the name 'college' to which none of them had any right."⁶⁰ Reformers accused these schools of appealing to "vulgar" material success at odds with professional expert knowledge used for the public good, but many business schools claimed that they were offering a public service and valuable training in scientific business practices. While some commercial "colleges" were indeed money-making rackets, there was also a strong class and gender dimension to the university leader's disdain, as proprietary business schools served a higher proportion of women, working-class, Irish and Jewish students. In addition, proprietary schools threatened the educational niche of traditional colleges and degree-granting institutions. Contemporaries at the time pushed back against the disparagement of elite educators. The *Boston Herald* editors dismissed the European fetish among so many education reformers and defended the reputation of some well-established business colleges like Bryant & Stratton, arguing that their success was evident in their many graduates who filled the highest positions of Boston's banks and businesses.⁶¹ Despite these endorsements, public schools and universities would continue to see proprietary schools as their competitors.

As for-profit schools surged after 1900, an alliance of progressive educators, philanthropists, and business leaders increasingly worked to investigate, expose, and regulate this sector. These constituents come together in Boston in 1911 when the Women's Municipal League, a group of progressive women reformers in Boston, hosted a meeting on "Opportunities for Vocational Training." At this meeting were David Snedden, Massachusetts Commissioner of Education, Frank Thompson, then assistant-superintendent of the Boston public schools, representatives from the

⁶⁰ "Our Trade At Stake," *The Boston Herald*, Oct. 31, 1899, 12.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Boston Vocational Bureau, the Girls Trade Education League, and members of the Boston Chamber of Commerce. Their subsequent report explained: “The consensus of opinion at this conference favored immediate investigation that would tend to prevent further exploitation of boys and girls in ‘private schools for profit’ in our city and state.” The investigation, through surveys and interviews with employers, teachers and alumni, would rank schools and then publicize these rankings. The authors of the report created three different grades of schools, depending on the use of what they deemed egregious practices. One was the use of solicitors who might “prejudice parents against the public schools,” or “cause pupils to drop out of high school.” Another was the practice of guaranteeing positions, which they considered a misleading form of advertising. Yet another was the lack of educational prerequisites: those that did not require at least a grammar school education were placed in the bottom category. Twenty-two schools in Boston were studied. They included nine Schools of Shorthand, several Commercial Colleges, and several schools of Business. Bryant & Stratton met the criteria for the first grade, while Comer’s School was placed into the third grade. This coalition might not have been able to shut down all “exploitative” schools, but the committee was explicit about their use of soft coercion: “By this method of giving publicity to good schools, those omitted because of low standards should be made to feel the need of a high standard.”⁶² Boston’s own investigation was one of many conducted in these years. Between 1909 and 1912, University of Chicago sociologist George Herbert Mead chaired a wide-ranging investigation of industrial and commercial schools in over ten cities sponsored by the City Club of Chicago. Their criticisms of private commercial schools—the use of solicitors, guarantees of

⁶² “Private For Profit Commercial Schools” 1914, Boston Chamber of Commerce Collection, Case 20, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

employment, lack of pre-requisites, and of prejudicing youth against public high schools—matched Boston’s investigation.⁶³

Legal means were also used to crack down on the abuse of for-profits. The School of Successful Salesmanship, Inc., founded in Boston in 1905 and attended by nearly 300 students yearly who paid \$80 tuition fees, was indicted in 1917 for using mail to defraud students, because it falsely “puffed” its goods and led students to believe that employment was guaranteed. Forrest O. Copithorne, the President of the School, was found guilty and sentenced to eight months in the House of Correction in Plymouth, MA.⁶⁴ However, in addition to legal means to regulate the most egregious of private enterprises, reformers like Bertha Stevens, George Herbert Mead, and the authors of the Boston investigation all advocated for public sector alternatives. As Stevens wrote, “Nothing adequate will ever be accomplished until the public school offers a course of training which sets up an effective rivalry to that now offered by private commercial schools.”⁶⁵ Indeed, it was the growth of free, public alternatives that proved to be the most effective means of undercutting the market position of proprietary institutions.

Public Evening High Schools

Already by the 1880s, as manual training and industrial education became popular, there was a corresponding rise of interest in public funding for commercial education across the country. Many

⁶³ City Club of Chicago, *A Report on Vocational Training in Chicago and in Other Cities* (Chicago: City Club of Chicago, 1912), 238–58; See also A.J. Angulo’s discussion of this report in A. J. Angulo, *Diploma Mills: How for-Profit Colleges Stiffed Students, Taxpayers, and the American Dream* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 47–52.

⁶⁴ “United States District Court,” in *Department Reports of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, vol. 4 (Bureau of Department Reports, 1917), 689–90.

⁶⁵ Stevens, *Private Commercial Schools*, 128.

of the same arguments were made on behalf of both types.⁶⁶ Employers supported free public provision of education and the standardization of practices among schools to aid their hiring process. Philanthropists and public school educators believed public “practical” commercial education was a democratic means of expanding opportunities for children who would otherwise not continue into academic high school, as well as those who could not afford the fees and risks of proprietary schools. Elite colleges and university leaders also supported public commercial options, often advancing the more conservative argument of Charles Eliot, that too many American youth aspired to be professionals than could possibly enter the ranks, and the public had a responsibility to help these students find their appropriate place in the industrial and business world.⁶⁷ Commentators pointed to the public commercial schools of continental Europe which were “much more elaborate and thorough than anything we have in this country.”⁶⁸ Germany in particular was held up as a model: “It is said that...the graduates of the commercial college of Berlin are greatly sought for in large London business houses to fill clerical positions, the knowledge they possess being far superior to that which the young Englishmen would have.”⁶⁹ International competitiveness required not only technical training for industry, but also training in commerce and salesmanship.⁷⁰ By 1901, the *Boston*

⁶⁶ “Commercial Education- A New Departure,” *Boston Herald*, April 29, 1901, 6.

⁶⁷ At a banquet of business leaders and educators celebrating Boston’s public High School of Commerce, Charles Eliot stated: “It is important that teachers and parents should cooperate in deciding the trade the child is best fitted for. Our American people don’t seem to realize that children must be sorted according to capacity. Even in our schools teachers resent that idea.” “Germans Ahead, Says President Eliot” *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb 11, 1908, 5.

⁶⁸ “Commercial Education,” *The Boston Herald*, April 11, 1887, 4

⁶⁹ “Commercial Education,” *The Boston Herald*, April 11, 1887, 4

⁷⁰ “Supremacy in the field of the world’s commerce is not yet conceded to Britons or Germans by the people of the United States; but it is plain that something like the German commercial schools needs to be established among us if this precedence is to be held by ourselves.” “Schools of Commerce,” *The Boston Herald*, Dec. 18, 1887, 12; “Before long we must find markets for our manufactured wares outside of our own borders, and in order to do this successfully we must have salesmen who know the language and habits of the people to whom they propose to sell goods.” “Commercial Education,” *The Boston Herald*, Dec. 19, 1887, 4.

Herald editors called the expansion of public commercial education a “foregone conclusion, for its practical importance is self-evident.”⁷¹

Specialized training in “commercial subjects” was pioneered in Boston’s evening high school, founded in 1869. With limited funding and a meagerly paid teaching staff, courses were offered and revised regularly based on student interest.⁷² Students were required to take a minimum of two courses for a total of 4 hours of instruction per week, but could take whatever courses they chose in an “elective system.”⁷³ The most popular courses from the start were English composition, bookkeeping, arithmetic, and penmanship; by the turn of the century, typewriting and phonography were as well.⁷⁴ New branch high schools were regularly opened, and in 1910 all branch schools were explicitly converted to “commercial high schools,” while the Central Evening High School (later segregated by sex) kept both academic and commercial courses. In 1920, the number of students pursuing academic subjects was only 286 out of 5,016, and “most of them are taking academic subjects with a strictly vocational end in view...in other words, our evening high schools are today vocational schools, with emphasis on commercial subjects.”⁷⁵

Demand for the expansion of evening high schools came from both the central immigrant districts as well as Boston’s suburbs. The North End Evening Commercial High School opened in 1911 in response to a petition, presented to the School Committee by the graduates of North End’s

⁷¹ “Commercial Education- A New Departure,” *Boston Herald*, April 29, 1901, 6

⁷² “Education by Gaslight,” *Boston Herald*, Oct. 26, 1885, 5; “The Evening High School,” *Boston Herald*, April 15, 1886, 5; “Evening Education,” May 30, 1886; “Stamping Out Illiteracy,” *The Sunday Herald*, Jan. 16, 1887, 2.

⁷³ “The Free evening Schools,” *Boston Herald*, Sep. 30, 1889, 4. While most studies of the elective system focus on the role of university leaders such as Charles W. Eliot, their origins in the public school system evening schools have drawn much less attention. “The New Vocationalism and the Elective System: The End of General Education?,” *AAHE-ERIC/Higher Education Research Report* 6, no. 8 (October 1, 1977): 18–21; Charles Eliot, “Elective Studies in American Colleges,” *Our Continent (1882-1882)*, February 22, 1882.

⁷⁴ *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1897*, 93; *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1902*, 29-30, 123-24; *Boston Public Schools Course of Study for the Evening High School*, School Doc. 12 (Boston: MPO, 1902); *Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Public Schools of the City of Boston, 1907*, 81-90.

⁷⁵ *Annual Report of the School Committee, City of Boston, 1911*, 41; *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1920*, 43-44.

Eliot elementary school signed by over 200 young people, complaining about the cost of carfares to attend the nearest evening high school in the South End.⁷⁶ In response, an evening high school was established in the Washington schoolhouse, and nearly all who had signed the petition enrolled. The same year, parents and students in suburban Dorchester submitted “repeated petitions” for an evening high school in their neighborhood, which opened in 1911 to 1,026 students. As reported upon its opening: “This school is one of the largest evening high schools in the city and among its pupils are an unusually large number of older people who are taking advanced work in commercial subjects.”⁷⁷ While one school served a crowded, predominantly Italian district and the other served a middle-class, native-born and second-generation Irish district, it is evident that opportunities for commercial education were extremely popular in many Boston neighborhoods.

Who were evening high school students? In the late nineteenth century, students were primarily 18-20-year-old men and women of New England heritage employed as clerks in retail stores or offices seeking extra training to advance their position.⁷⁸ Many were quite explicit in the relationship they saw between their extra training and their work. In 1886 the headmaster of the Evening High School asked a group of women why they attended, to which one replied, “Why...it is simply a matter of dollars and cents. We are worth more to our employers, and we come here for the money we can get out of it.”⁷⁹ In the next decades as daytime high school enrollment increased, evening high schools served a more heavily second-generation immigrant and working class

⁷⁶ *Annual Report of the School Committee, City of Boston 1911*, 42-43. This was the same North End elementary school in which manual training had first been pioneered in cooperation with the North Bennet Street Industrial School in 1888.

⁷⁷ *Annual Report of the School Committee, City of Boston 1911*, 41-42.

⁷⁸ Testimony of Edward C. Carragan, Principal of the Evening High School, in Henry W. Blair, *Report of the Committee of the Senate Upon the Relations Between Labor and Capital*, Vol. 3, 457-460. According to a feature in the Boston Herald in 1882, the average age of students was 19-20, the oldest being 21 and youngest 14. Clerks, cashiers, bookkeepers, salesmen, compositors and seamstresses comprised 70% of regular attendees, although 64 industries total were represented, including manufacturers, male retail venders, teachers, milliners and shopgirls. “A few students of specialties in mechanics, medicine and law are found among the earnest partakers of mathematics, literature, and French.” “The Evening High School,” *The Sunday Herald*, Jan 22, 1882, 7.

⁷⁹ “The Evening High School,” *Boston Herald*, April 15, 1886, 5.

constituency, but students similarly tended to be employed in the lower ends of office and sales work.⁸⁰ Of women students in 1915, two-thirds had fathers who were manual workers, 70% were of foreign-born parentage, especially of Russian-Jewish heritage, and 20% were foreign-born themselves.⁸¹ These students still differed significantly from the evening elementary school students, who were primarily adult first-generation immigrants learning English, whereas nearly 40% of female evening high school students had a few years of day-time high school training already.⁸² But on the whole they were lower-middle class, grammar school graduates, and those with partial high school training, taking additional commercial courses that could aid them in their current work or allow them to enter into white-collar employment.

Figures 4.12 and 4.13 depict enrollment numbers in the Evening High Schools by gender and by “commercial” or “non-commercial” subjects from 1913 to 1940.⁸³ For comparison, these charts also depict enrollment in separate evening industrial schools. They demonstrate that for both sexes, commercial subjects were extremely popular, and for women in particular they came at the exclusion of almost all other subjects. From 1869 to the mid-twentieth century at least, Boston’s evening high schools were effectively specialized commercial schools.

⁸⁰ Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1913, 102-103. According to a 1915 study of Boston’s public evening high school population in 1915, 52% of female students were employed in office and retail work, 26% were employed in manufacturing work, 2.7 were in domestic service, and 16% were at home. May Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service* (Boston: WEIU, 1915), 50.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 48–49.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸³ This is the level of detail that was reported in the *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools*, and it was only in 1913 that enrollment in evening high schools was broken out by gender and course type.

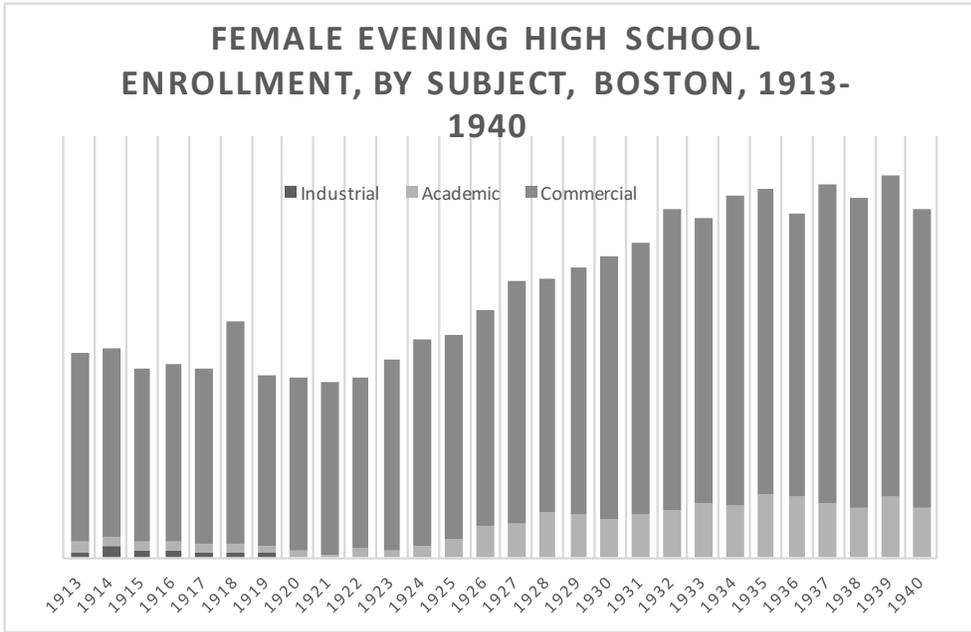


Figure 4.12

Sources: Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1913-1940.

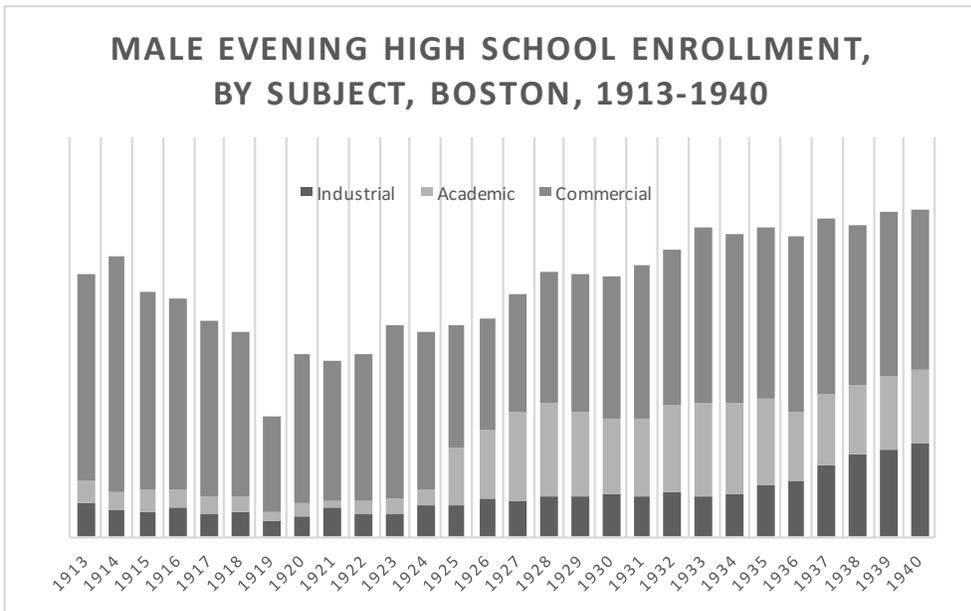


Figure 4.13

Sources: Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1913-1940.

Public Day-Time High Schools

The quiet transformation in this period that affected the greatest number of young people was the spectacular boom of public day high schools as white-collar training schools. This surge took place across the northern United States.⁸⁴ By 1900, the public day high schools had adopted the elective system pioneered in the evening high schools and had become flexible institutions responsive to student curricular demands. Day high schools in the late nineteenth century had strict sequences of courses by year, but as high school enrollment rose, there was push back against uniformity from multiple directions. In the context of a rapidly changing industrial landscape, parents, students, social reformers, educators and employers complained about the lack of practical relevance of classes to a student's occupational future, and argued that a fixed curriculum was too rigid of an educational model.⁸⁵ Edwin Seaver, Superintendent of Schools from 1880-1904, argued that the high schools required either a larger system of differentiated courses, or, his preferred option, allowing students to choose. A proponent of "practical" education, Seaver argued that a flexible curriculum was the best way to ensure that students remained in school as long as possible and received the training they needed to advance into better occupations.⁸⁶ After 1891, curricular modifications were made to allow students to substitute commercial subjects for other requirements.⁸⁷ In 1897, a two-year

⁸⁴ Lisa Fine explores Chicago, Harvey Kantor examines California, Illeen DeVault looks at Pittsburgh; both Claudia Goldin and John Rury draw on national data to examine the high school boom across the United States. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper*, 118–86; Kantor, *Learning to Earn*, 134–48; Illeen A. DeVault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor: Class and Clerical Work in Turn-Of-The-Century Pittsburgh* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990); Goldin, "America's Graduation from High School"; Rury, *Education and Women's Work*.

⁸⁵ "Overcrowding" of the curriculum emerged as an additional problem, as more subjects were simply added to the educational offerings over time. By 1890, these included hygiene, physical training, choral practice, drawing, sewing, foreign languages, sciences, advanced mathematics, as well as typewriting, penmanship, bookkeeping, and commercial arithmetic. *Course of Study for the High Schools*, School Doc. 14, 1891 (Boston: Rockwell & Churchill, 1891).

⁸⁶ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1900*, 64-66.

⁸⁷In 1906 the school committee introduced a fairly loose curricular framework, requiring 13 points in English, 7 points in foreign language or phonography and typewriting, 4 in math or bookkeeping, three in history, three in science, six in physical training, three in choral practice, one in hygiene, and forty additional elective credits, for a total of 76 to graduate. *Annual Report of the School Committee, 1906*, 32-33.

commercial course of study was introduced into the Girls High School and Roxbury High School, including phonography, typewriting, penmanship, commercial arithmetic, bookkeeping, and commercial geography. By 1899, stenography and typewriting were offered in seven Boston high schools. In 1898 the Commissioner of Education wrote, “The business course in the greatest number of these (public high) schools does not differ from the business course in the private secondary schools.”⁸⁸

By the turn of the century, secondary school attendance was growing at a rapid pace. By 1915, Superintendent Dyer noted a “serious crisis” of overcrowding in the existing high schools.⁸⁹ In 1910, the total number of students in Boston’s secondary schools was approximately 13,000; by 1930, nearly 27,000.⁹⁰ New buildings were constructed as numbers grew, but these construction projects were expensive, and the school system could not always keep up with demand.⁹¹ The total amount spent by the school committee on secondary schools increased 375% between 1910 and 1929, from less than one million to over three million dollars.⁹² Enrollment statistics suggest that with greater flexibility, high school students strongly preferred commercial classes, the majority enrolling for one or two years before leaving for work. In the 1910s and 1920s, about half of all students were enrolled in commercial classes, and women enrolled at a rate of 60%. The decentralization of high schools also allowed for much local variation. Charlestown and East Boston High Schools, which were heavily Irish working-class neighborhoods, had over 80% of female students enrolled in commercial subjects, whereas the wealthier suburbs of Hyde Park and West

⁸⁸ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1928*, 45.

⁸⁹ Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1915*, 9.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Burke, *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1930*, 4. Registration and enrollment declined during WWI to an average membership low of 14,963 in 1918-19 before jumping back up to pre-war numbers by 1921. *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools in Documents of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1921*, 7.

⁹¹ Dyer noted an excess of 2,000 students “who are not satisfactorily housed,” due to the overcrowding of high schools. *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1915*, 9.

⁹² *Annual Report of the Business Agent in Documents of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1910; Annual Report of the Business Manager on Cost of Public School Education, in Documents of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1929*, 50.

Roxbury had only 50-53% of women in commercial subjects.⁹³ Course material was tailored for men and women, again, depending on local circumstances. Single-sex schools segregated all their courses, and men tended to receive more instruction in business administration whereas women learned shorthand and typewriting. In co-ed schools, classes in office training might be combined for men and women, but sales courses for men covered wholesale distribution, while women exclusively trained for retail work.⁹⁴

Superintendent Frank Thompson explains this rising demand for secondary education: “The educational and social significance of this phenomenon needs some interpretation. It is apparent that the high school is no longer a selective institution for a minority of pupils... Today all kinds of children with all kinds of abilities, interests and life purposes go to high school.” As we have seen in previous chapters, Thompson celebrated the flexible, varied curricular options of the public schools as necessary. As John C. Brodhead notes in his 1923 report as assistant superintendent, “It should be borne in mind that the variety of educational opportunities offered in Boston is certainly one of the factors in our high percentage of secondary school enrollment.”⁹⁵ In 1931, Superintendent Jeremiah Burke echoed this sentiment: “Suppose in the interest of economy that the School Committee tomorrow should decree... the restriction of courses in the four upper grades of our school system to the preparation for college alone. By a very generous estimate not more than one half of the pupils now attending these schools would remain.”⁹⁶ Evidence suggests even fewer students would have remained. Based on annual enrollment statistics, I have estimated the number

⁹³ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1913*, 94; *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1928*, 49-50; Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 25-30; Helen Rich Norton, *Department-Store Education*, 60. Across the country, women dominated commercial courses. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper*, 126; DeVault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor*. Local district schools also varied in commercial offerings. Roxbury High School, which became an entirely female school in 1911, established a short, 1-2 year intensive phonography course and bookkeeping course as an alternative to the first years of regular high school specifically for elementary graduates who needed to go to work as soon as possible. Dorchester High School began a separate 1-year advanced commercial training course for high school graduates. Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 41-42.

⁹⁴ Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 41.

of students pursuing different types of courses within Boston’s high schools from 1880-1940, depicted in Figures 4.14 and 4.15.⁹⁷

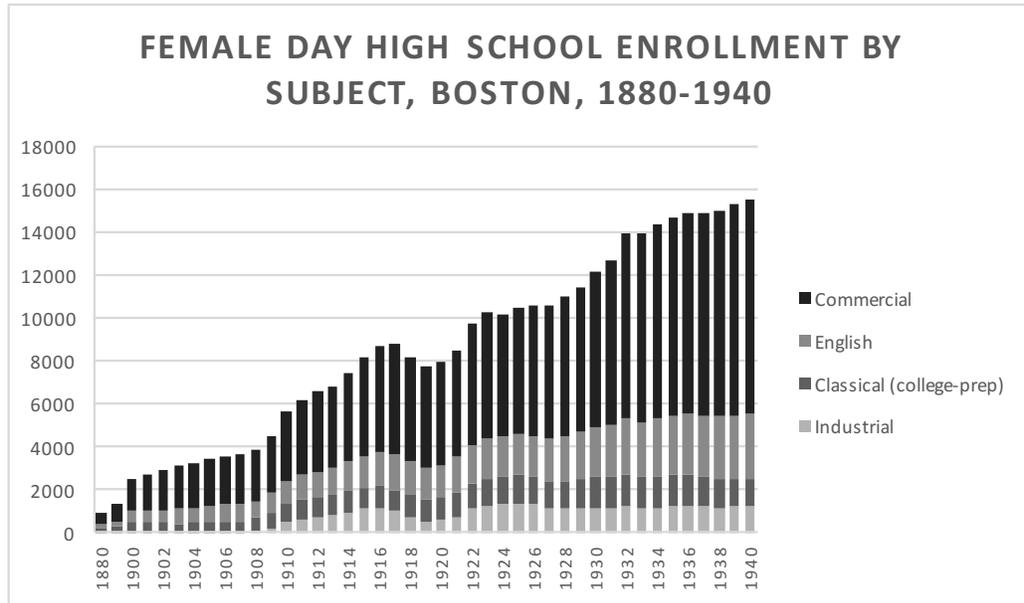


Figure 4.14

Sources: *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1880-1940*.

Note: See footnote 97.

⁹⁵Burke, *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1923*, 89.

⁹⁶ Address delivered by Burke at unknown date to a Parent Teachers Association, reprinted as his “Philosophy of Education,” in a tribute to Burke after his death the same year, in the *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1931*, 10.

⁹⁷ Enrollment statistics by school were listed annually, and I have estimated the relative proportion of students in each school pursuing different course types. Some schools (like Boston’s High School of Commerce) I place entirely into one category, while others were mixed. “Commercial” refers to those students who took at least one commercial subject in high school (penmanship, bookkeeping, typewriting, shorthand (stenography), commercial arithmetic), or attended specialized commercial schools like the High School of Commerce or Boston Clerical School. “English” describes those in the more common academic curriculum including modern languages and science offered in the central and district High Schools. The “Classical” curriculum was intended for those preparing for college, and includes those taking Latin and advanced math or science courses, or who enrolled in one of Boston’s Latin Schools. “Industrial” indicates those who attended specialized trade, industrial, or practical arts schools. *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1880-1940*.

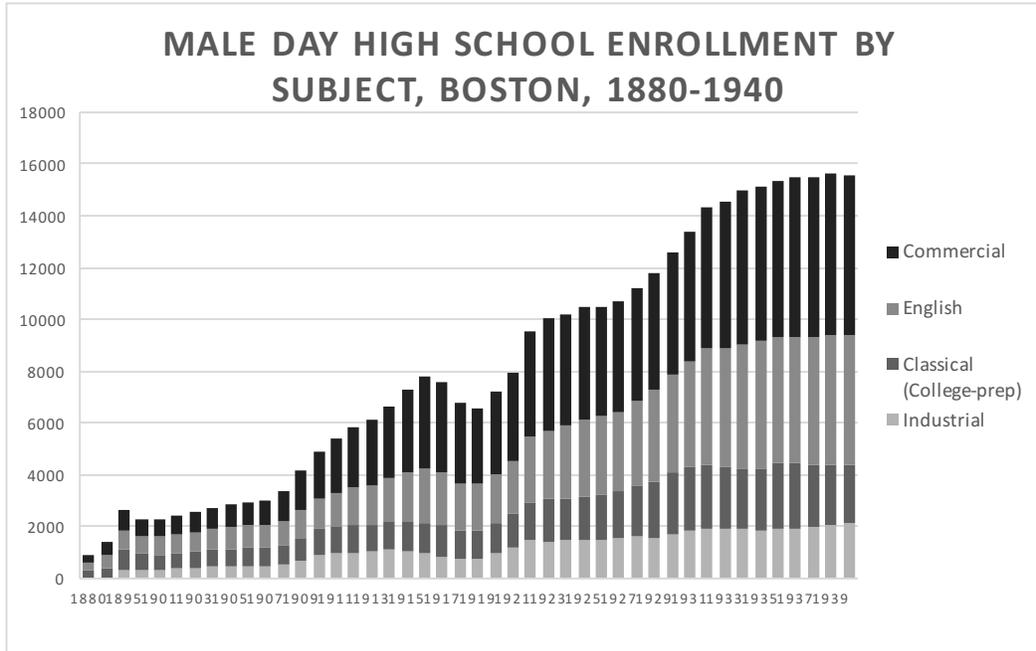


Figure 4.15

Sources: Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1880-1940.

Note: See footnote 97.

The overwhelming majority of women and a large proportion of men enrolled in at least one commercial subject (labeled as “commercial”) or pursued English subjects, whereas far smaller numbers enrolled in industrial and classical college-preparatory courses.

High School students pursuing commercial classes tended to come from families of modest backgrounds. A higher proportion of commercial students had fathers in manufacturing and personal service, and fewer professionals and businessmen, than their counterparts in academic courses. Commercial students also had much higher rates of leaving school early to begin a job – they dropped out of school at almost double the rates of those in academic courses after their second year. Nearly half of all high school students were first or second generation immigrants, and their representation was even higher in commercial courses, especially Irish and Russian Jewish immigrants. Many families made great sacrifices to send to their children to high school for

commercial instruction. In 1914, one widowed mother who had sent her only daughter to high school reported that for 8 years she had kept lodgers, making only enough profit to send her little girl to school, but she had placed her child in a fairly good position at \$10 a week and could rest content with the knowledge that she had done all within her power to educate her daughter.⁹⁸

Specialized Public Commercial Schools

While the transformation of Boston's neighborhood high schools impacted the largest number of students, more attention was devoted to Boston's new specialized commercial institutions. Specialized vocational schools embodied reformers' attempts to use education and training to elevate white-collar occupations into professions. Even more so than their high school counterparts, they built the gendered norms of the labor market into their school structure and curriculum. Unlike similar programs for industrial occupations, commercial schools were highly popular. However, because education had very little power on its own to affect occupational status, they did not fulfill all of their advocates' expectations. While public commercial schools may have initially bestowed a fairly exclusive credential, their popularity over the next decades contributed to the abundance of white-collar workers, and reformers continued to face the same challenges these schools were intended to address.

The first specifically daytime public commercial school was a men's-only High School of Commerce, opened in 1906. The school was based on a similar school recently opened in New York, and there were parallel movements for men's commercial high schools across the United States.⁹⁹ In Boston, the school's most vocal champion was Boston-Irish Mayor John. F. Fitzgerald,

⁹⁸ Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 31–33, 155–57.

⁹⁹ The New York City High School of Commerce was founded in 1901, and received much press and popular support in the pages of Boston newspapers: "School of Commerce: Corner Stone Laid in New York," *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 15,

who made the school a central feature of his 1905 election campaign calling for the revitalization the New England economy to create a “bigger, better, and busier” Boston.¹⁰⁰ In his inaugural address in January of 1906, he stated, “The most vitally important department of the city government is the School Department,” and called for “the immediate establishment of a Commercial High School.”¹⁰¹ Public commercial education was the key method to achieve business revitalization, modeled on the schools of Germany, whose success was based on “their early recognition of the fact that modern civilization is based...upon scientifically conducted business in the broad sense of that term.”¹⁰² While acknowledging that women should also have commercial opportunities, his focus on a men’s school as well as his masculine rhetoric made his priorities clear.¹⁰³ Within the Democratic Party, commercial education matched a populist focus on practical education as opposed to expenditure on the college-bound, and did not generate opposition from Democratic trade unionists. Fitzgerald would look back on this men’s school as one of his crowning achievements: “I consider the efforts that I have made to establish a commercial high school one of the best things that have ever been

1901, 7; “A High School of Commerce,” *Boston Daily Globe*, May 12, 1904, 6; “High School of Commerce,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 8, 1905, 10.

In Feb of 1906, the Mayor and several school committee members visited the New York High School of Commerce, and immediately upon their return the school committee voted to approve the plan for establishing a commercial high school in Boston. “Agree Boston Needs School of Commerce: Mayor and the School Board Unite on New York Idea.” *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb. 3, 1906, 1.

Lisa Fine describes similar interest for a male commercial high school in Chicago between 1900 and 1909. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper*, 122.

¹⁰⁰ James J. Connolly, *The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism: Urban Political Culture in Boston, 1900-1925* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 84.

¹⁰¹ *Inaugural Address of John F. Fitzgerald to the City Council, 1906* (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1906), 36-39.

¹⁰² He lamented that “Boston no longer stands at the head in education,” and claimed that the dearth of business education opportunities in the public schools was evidenced “by the fact that Boston is filled with private so-called business colleges, which are supported mainly by Boston students of school age, which have to pay for this special instruction.” *Inaugural Address of John F. Fitzgerald, 1906*, 36-39

¹⁰³ “The community owes it to itself to make the most of its brains and brawn, to utilize every scrap of talent within it for its development and enrichment...Boston must...take its stand in the forefront of progress commercially, industrially, and intellectually, and the place to begin is in the schoolroom.” *Inaugural Address of John F. Fitzgerald, 1906*, 40.

done by any citizen of Boston.”¹⁰⁴ Support for this commercial school was strong across the political spectrum. While major clashes between Boston’s Irish Democrats and Protestant Republicans occurred within the highly politicized school committee, commercial programs generated relatively little dispute. In fact, James J. Storrow, a Republican reformer who became James Fitzgerald’s fiercest political opponent, did not distance himself from Fitzgerald’s commercial high school, but claimed credit for the school himself, arguing that he had put forward the idea years earlier.¹⁰⁵ Arguments over claiming credit for this school indicate the political popularity of this initiative across the political spectrum.¹⁰⁶

The new High School of Commerce opened with a curriculum both “liberal and vocational,” consisting of both general knowledge as well as subjects of commerce including English, History, Civil Government, Commercial Law, Geography, Commercial Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Penmanship, Typewriting, Bookkeeping, German, French or Spanish, and a range of electives including stenography, freehand drawing, commercial design, political economy, or economics.¹⁰⁷ A lecture series on the local industries of Boston and weekly talks by business leaders were arranged.¹⁰⁸ The close ties forged with business leaders were noted from the opening of the school. “The business men have shown a marked readiness to cooperate in the development of the school” and “this is the first time that such cooperation between the school authorities and the business men has been effected in this country.”¹⁰⁹ Unlike trade education, trade unions did not stand in the way of

¹⁰⁴ “Businessmen Asked to Help,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Nov. 28, 1906, 7.

¹⁰⁵ Storrow ran against Fitzgerald for Mayor in 1909, but lost. “Broadside at Fitzgerald: Storrow Accuses him of Underground Methods,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 5, 1909, 1; “Fitzgerald in Answer: Disavows Responsibility for Storrow Stories,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 6, 1909, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Julia Duff raised a few concerns when the school first opened, namely the wisdom of spending so much when grammar schools needed the money, but was not in opposition to commercial education as such. “Storrow Mark for Mrs. Duff,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 5, 1907, 7.

¹⁰⁷ *Course of Study for the High School of Commerce*, School Doc. 11 (Boston, 1906).

¹⁰⁸ *Annual Report of the School Committee, 1906*, 31.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*; *Annual Report of the School Committee, 1907*, 16.

close cooperation between school officials and employers. Within the first months of the school's opening, the School Committee passed an order inviting the Presidents of the Chamber of Commerce, Merchants Association, and the Associated Board of Trade to form an advisory committee for the school. An initial plan of a 5-person advisory board became 25 when many more businessmen expressed interest.¹¹⁰ Lucius Tuttle, President of the Boston & Maine Railroad, was elected president of the board.¹¹¹ This advisory board published annual reports recommending reforms for the new High School, most of which were quickly adopted, including the coordination of occasional employment assignments, Christmas-time and summer apprenticeships, new suggestions for part-time "continuation" schools that would also become part of the Boston public school system by 1910, and a recommendation to relocate the school into the central business district, accomplished by 1915.¹¹² Each passing year, Boston businessmen heaped high praise on the school.¹¹³ By 1911, the school operated an employment bureau that had "won the confidence of a large number of firms to such an extent that boys recommended from the school are almost sure to be employed in preference to those who come without such recommendation."¹¹⁴ For employers, the high school was a labor agency on which it could draw for trained and cheap labor for entry-level business positions. These arrangements foreshadowed the cooperative high school programs in the trades that began in 1913, but with hundreds instead of dozens of students. In 1913 only 65 students enrolled in a high school cooperative industrial course, whereas that year 600 commerce students worked an occasional assignment at a local business firm, and every 2nd and 3rd year student

¹¹⁰ "Businessmen Asked to Help," *Boston Daily Globe*, Nov. 28, 1906, 7; *Annual Report of the School Committee, 1906*, 32.

¹¹¹ For full list of board members, see Appendix, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1910*, 152.

¹¹² "Class and Store Work Together," *Boston Herald*, Nov 6, 1910, 22; *Annual Report of the School Committee, 1907*, 16-17; "Dedicate New High School of Commerce," *Boston Daily Globe*, Oct. 30, 1915, 9; *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1908*, 49-55.

¹¹³ "Germans Ahead, Says Pres. Eliot - New High School of Commerce Boomed by Businessmen," *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb 11, 1908, 5; "Boston Idea Grows," *Boston Daily Globe*, May 21, 1909, 10.

¹¹⁴ *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1911*, 44-45.

(over 500 total) was expected to participate in a summer apprenticeship program.¹¹⁵ The school grew rapidly, and it became second only to the English High School in enrollment.

It is perhaps puzzling that a men's commercial high school was opened first, despite the much higher demand for commercial education among women. However, the opening of this school can be interpreted as a reaction to the increasing feminization of white-collar work, which fueled popular support for a men's commercial institution. For many members of Boston's political and economic leadership, support for a new men's high school of commerce also reflected gendered and racial anxieties of losing international ground among competing global powers. Fitzgerald's "bigger, better, and busier Boston" was a decisively masculine program to recover Boston's declining status on a national and international stage. The school's first appointed headmaster, Frank V. Thompson, articulated these concerns more explicitly.¹¹⁶ Thompson had been involved in commercial education in the public schools since 1901, and the summer before Boston's High School of Commerce opened, Thompson went on a tour of European commercial schools. As he reported on July 30, 1906: "In Europe today, Germany is the nation which has the most evident ascendant star and education is the secret of her success."¹¹⁷ Thompson argued that commercial education, especially in foreign languages and international business customs, would make American businessmen less parochial and enable expansion of American goods into foreign markets.¹¹⁸ This

¹¹⁵ *Annual Report of the School Committee, 1913*, 150; *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1914*, 55.

¹¹⁶ Virtually all of Thompson's public talks between 1906-1907 focused on this theme: "Germany Leads," *Boston Daily Globe*, Jul. 30, 1906, 12; "Talk on Salesmanship," *Boston Herald*, Feb. 13, 1907, 16; "Commerce School Abroad his Theme: Headmaster Thompson Says Boston Must Work to Keep Up with Rival Germany," *Boston Herald*, Nov. 19, 1907, 12.

¹¹⁷ "Germany Leads," *Boston Daily Globe*, Jul. 30, 1906, 12.

¹¹⁸ "Our goods, though superior and cheaper, are frequently outsold by other kinds. Our agents abroad rarely have a knowledge of the language of the country or any comprehension or sympathy with the genius of the foreign peoples. The American drummer, with his hat on the back of his head, his hands in his pockets, and a breezy, debonair manner, who breaks briskly into the sanctum of the ceremonious foreign businessman's office, never fails to make an impression, but not so frequently a sale." "Germany Leads," *Boston Daily Globe*, Jul. 30, 1906, 12.

argument had widespread support among business leaders, educators, and politicians alike.¹¹⁹ As reported in the *Boston Globe*, “The school will seek to give young men broader training and larger equipment essential for progress and mastery in the business world today.”¹²⁰ In a pattern that would repeat itself numerous times in Boston’s educational history, men’s schools were founded to attract more men into increasingly feminized fields, as a way to (it was hoped) maintain or increase their status.¹²¹ This gendered dimension of education policy was repeated in cities across the country, and paralleled the public preoccupation with the decline of men’s apprenticeship and support for industrial education.¹²² Public educational systems largely prioritized men’s trajectories, despite the use of these institutions by women students for their own purposes.

When women’s-only public schools were founded, they tended to receive less funding and offer limited curricular offerings. Boston opened a Boston Clerical School for women in 1914. Initial plans for this school were drawn up in 1910, primarily in response to complaints of overcrowding of commercial subjects in the neighborhood high schools.¹²³ Rather than a women’s equivalent of the High School of Commerce, aiming at worldly knowledge of global business methods, the

¹¹⁹ “Educators Talk State Education: President Tuttle of B.&M. Pleads for Commercial School Extension,” *Boston Herald*, May 25, 1907, “Causes, Not Symptoms,” *Boston Herald*, March 11, 1907, 6.

¹²⁰ When the opening of the new school was announced in newspapers, its debt to Germany was acknowledged in the headline “Boston’s New High School of Commerce Opens Next Wednesday—on German System,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Sep. 6, 1906, 16. Another spur to Boston’s movement on this front was the New York City High School of Commerce, founded in 1901, which received much press and popular support in the pages of Boston newspapers (For example, see “School of Commerce: Corner Stone Laid in New York,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 15, 1901, 7; “A High School of Commerce,” *Boston Daily Globe*, May 12, 1904, 6; “High School of Commerce,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 8, 1905, 10). In Feb of 1906, the Mayor and several school committee members visited the New York High School of Commerce, and immediately upon their return the school committee voted to approve the plan for establishing a commercial high school in Boston. “Agree Boston Needs School of Commerce: Mayor and the School Board Unite on New York Idea,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb. 3, 1906, 1.

¹²¹ This was the rationale of the founding of Boston University’s College of Business Administration, which will be described in Chapter 5.

¹²² In Chicago, supporters of a male commercial high school expressed concern over the 70% to 30% ratio of girls to boys in the cities high schools, and believed a commercial school would attract more men to high schools. It was not to be “a school where simply bookkeeping, stenography, telegraphy, and typewriting may be taught to prepare boys for clerkships, but a school where opportunities should be offered for science, math, commercial geography, commercial law, banking, political economy, civics, and modern languages.” It would also provide opportunities for men to engage in the global world of trade. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper*, 121–22.

¹²³ *Annual Report of the School Committee, 1910*, 46–47.

proposed Clerical school intended to be a specialized vocational school with “decidedly practical” courses of “immediate value” to students in commercial or secretarial occupations. In contrast to the swift opening of the men’s High School of Commerce, however, no movement was made on a women’s institution for another four years. When it finally was established in 1914, the Clerical School was placed in the same building as Roxbury High School, an all-girls High School with one of the highest levels of commercial enrollment.¹²⁴ The Clerical school, open to students who had already completed two or three years of general high school, effectively operated as a specialized track within Roxbury High School, preparing women for the limited clerical occupations available to them. Three curricular options were available. One course in office service was open to girls who had completed two years of high school, consisting of bookkeeping, office practice, commercial arithmetic, commercial law, penmanship and business English. A second course for “stenographers and high grade clerks” for women who had completed three years of high school consisted of shorthand, typewriting, penmanship, business arithmetic, English, bookkeeping, office practice, and political geography. A third course, which began in the 1915-1916 academic year, was an advanced course offered to both men and women high school graduates, tailored for either bookkeepers and accountants, or secretaries.¹²⁵

The contrast with the High School of Commerce was not only reflected in the curricular differences, but also in the funding and accommodation disparities. While the possibility of transferring the school to the same building as Commerce was initially deemed “probable,” it shared the Roxbury High School building through the 1920s.¹²⁶ In the meantime, following the recommendation of the Advisory Board of the High School of Commerce, an impressive new

¹²⁴ *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1914*, 62; “Boston Clerical School for Girls: Only School of its Kind,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Jan 10, 1915, SM11.

¹²⁵ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1914*, 176-77.

¹²⁶ “Clerical High School Order,” *Boston Daily Globe*, May 19, 1914, 10.

Commerce building in the Fenway opened in 1915 to accommodate 1,800 people, “the most expensive high school yet constructed.”¹²⁷ These gender disparities also were evident in the relative location of each school. Again following the recommendation of the Advisory Board, Commerce’s new building was placed in central Boston close to the business district. The Clerical School remained in Boston’s suburbs. In 1925, parents of Clerical School students petitioned to expand the school, complaining of its cramped quarters in contrast to the extraordinary investment in the Commerce building. The school committee ignored this petition.¹²⁸

The Business Curriculum

Within the emerging white-collar hierarchy, higher educational attainment mapped very closely onto higher status and pay. A 1914 WEIU study of young women office workers demonstrated the strong correlation between higher levels of education and higher wages.¹²⁹ They found that more than 51.1% of women high school graduates earned \$8 a week or more, compared to 24.2% of non-graduates, and only 8% of those with just a grammar school education.¹³⁰ These education levels matched the women’s occupational hierarchy: 80.2% of stenographers were high school graduates, compared to 48% of women clerks.¹³¹ As the report concluded: “Education seems to be the most important determining factor in advancement in office service, and the relationship between education and wage is direct.”¹³² A study of sales workers, while demonstrating the lower average

¹²⁷ *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1915*, 8.

¹²⁸ “Ask Building for Clerical School – Parents Declare Rooms Now Overcrowded – Use of Damp and Unhealthy Basement Alleged,” *Boston Daily Globe*, May 13, 1925, 22.

¹²⁹ WEIU, *Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 127, 167.

¹³⁰ Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 39.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 36. Because their sample was limited to young women, these educational rates are higher than those of all clerical workers.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 147.

education rates among sales workers than office workers, also found a similar relationship between occupational status and level of education. Whereas only 31% of floor, errand, cash, and teller workers had more than a grammar school education, 79% of salespeople had.¹³³

Evidence suggests that this educational advantage was not rigidly formalized or articulated by employers. In his study of commercial education in 1915, Frank Thompson argued that few employers had any official education requirements.¹³⁴ Citing a survey conducted by the Boston Chamber of Commerce of 139 business employers, he noted that in response to the question “What education beyond the grammar school seems to you valuable?” 85% responded “More education, but not defined.” As Thompson concluded, “It was apparent to the investigator that many business men know very little about the different kinds of commercial courses available in their own city.”¹³⁵ Despite this apparent lack of knowledge, employers increasingly relied on students from public high schools.

What exactly did high schools provide to students? The “human capital” acquired through training was a wide range of both technical skills and class- and gender-based cultural norms.¹³⁶ The “technical skills” relevant to white-collar work included a wide array of proficiencies. As was the case in the trades, the operation of special office machinery (such as typewriters, cash registers, or telephone switchboards) was typically learned quickly on the job in short training programs, or could

¹³³ Eaves, *Training for Store Service*, 44. This educational premium is compatible with the finding that, as a whole sector, average education levels for male and female office workers only increased slightly. As white-collar work transformed from fairly exclusive small-firm apprenticeships to vast female sales and office bureaucracies, occupational statistics suggest an overall averaging trend in education levels—a few years of high school becoming the most common. In addition, women clerks, despite disproportionately filling the lower rungs of the occupations ladder, were on average always more highly educated than their male counterparts. Srole, “Feminization of Clerical Work,” 46–48, 278, 664.; Fletcher, D. H., “Report of Committee on Commercial Education” July 1914, Boston Chamber of Commerce Collection, Case 20, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA.

¹³⁴ “Business men, as a rule, do not set educational standards even for clerical employees.” Thompson, *Commercial Education*, 116.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³⁶ Leah Platt Boustan, Carola Frydman, and Robert A. Margo, *Human Capital in History: The American Record* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F Katz, *The Race Between Education and Technology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

be learned in a few months in a specialized commercial school. While important, they could be acquired rapidly by any grammar school graduate. The WEIU study found that those who left school early to get specialized commercial training to work were worse off, in pay and occupational advantages, than those who completed a general high school course.¹³⁷

The general technical skills required for white-collar work, and central to the high school curriculum, were writing, reading, and mathematics. Repeated surveys found that when asked how the schools could improve, employers overwhelmingly ranked the “3Rs” over other specialized commercial subjects.¹³⁸ But employers’ understanding of these technical skills was laden with specific cultural norms and the proprieties of “office etiquette.”¹³⁹ Formal business correspondence required knowledge of how to properly format, address, date, and sign off a letter, employ a broad vocabulary, spell flawlessly, and use a “gracious and dignified tone.” For those who worked in stores and spoke regularly to upper-class customers, employees were expected to know “correct usage [of English] and what may be termed good taste or judgment in the selection of words.” A study of department store training noted that many shop girls gave away their lower-class background by using “the words, phrases, and constructions of their associates of the less-educated classes” which turned away customers.¹⁴⁰ Appropriate speech was essential for telephone operators whose sole impression was made through their voice. Women who had foreign accents were eliminated entirely from the labor pool, as were women with “harsh or displeasing voices.” They were instructed to use “the cheery tones of a Pollyanna,” to be “courteous and ladylike,” and were provided specific

¹³⁷ Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 43.

¹³⁸ “Master the ‘Three R’s’ – This is What Most Business Men Demand of the School Graduate,” *Boston Daily Globe*, July 8, 1910, 4; One employer commented, when asked about the defects of present-day school training in Boston, wrote: “Schools are absolutely bad. All applicants are sadly deficient in rudimentary education. Poor in penmanship, spelling and arithmetic. We rarely find applicants – especially male—who are above the primary steps in education.” Fletcher, D. H., “Report of Committee on Commercial Education,” 30–31.

¹³⁹ Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 65.

¹⁴⁰ Helen Rich Norton, *Department-Store Education*, 33–35.

phrases when reporting news that might disappoint clients (such as that a line was busy). Proper grammar and a wide vocabulary was essential because most telephone subscribers in the early twentieth century were middle and upper class and, as a Bell official explained, the operator had to “cope with them on an equal plane.”¹⁴¹

In addition to proper English usage, a broad range of complex mental tasks involving communication and expression were used regularly in the office world. These were also part of a “general” high school curriculum rather than specifically “commercial” training. A manager from Westinghouse Electrical & Manufacturing Company in 1917 described the type of capacities that one employer expected his office staff to possess:

If a girl comes into the office as a stenographer, it is of little importance to us whether she can write sixty words a minute on the typewriter, and take down her notes at one hundred words per minute and transcribe everything you dictate, and transcribe it exactly as you dictate. It is far more important if she has a capacity for quick comprehension about our business...and whether she has good judgment of the construction of a letter, so that...as she gets worked into the organization and some man dictates a letter hurriedly, she can...suggest that the letter is not clear and should be re-phrased in certain particularities...is it clear, do you understand it, is it a good forcible letter?... That is the idea which is typical of the capacity which we want in all kinds of people.¹⁴²

“Quick comprehension” and “good judgment” were vague intellectual capacities that were laden with class-based norms and expectations. But even more so than these qualities, which still approximated a type of technical skill, employers repeatedly invoked “character” and “personality” as the most important qualities of employees. In one meeting of store officials and sales training representatives in 1920, “it was agreed unanimously that personal characteristics are of much greater importance than technical knowledge.”¹⁴³ “Character” was most often a male descriptor. The same

¹⁴¹ Norwood, *Labor's Flaming Youth*, 35–41.

¹⁴² C. R. Dooley, *Fifth Annual Convention of the National Association of Corporation Schools* (1917), 192-193.

¹⁴³ Eaves, *Training for Store Service*, 82.

employer who described the stenographer above also stated: “I do not think there is anything more important than [good character], and I am sure that we all recognize it so clearly it is hardly worth while to discuss it...By character, we mean...a fellow who is courteous, who is considerate, who is tolerant, who will work five minutes overtime in order to save one hour the next day, or who will work for the love of his work, and does not quit exactly when the whistle blows.”¹⁴⁴ For men, character implied collegiality, good manners, loyalty to the firm, as well as deep moral and ethical standards. For women, “personality” was the term used to describe the best qualities of her gender.¹⁴⁵ One commentator noted the importance of “courteous manners, dainty personal habits, low-pitched voices, correct and fluent speech and a sympathetic disposition.” Social skills were also required, including “skill in meeting all sorts of persons ...the ability to make pleasing impressions and to maintain sympathetic and harmonious relations with customers and fellow workers.”¹⁴⁶ Bad traits were to be avoided at all costs, especially “quarrelsome, lack of tact, irritating manners,” gum chewing, and, one of the most common complaints of shop girls, talking too much.¹⁴⁷ Physical appearance was also essential. One study of office workers stated: “Employers and particularly businessmen demand not only women of technical ability but of neat, attractive appearance and pleasing personality,” a study of store work training explained: “the public buys most willingly from young, good-looking, neatly dressed women.”¹⁴⁸

Public high schools played a large role in teaching many of these personal and gendered behavioral norms. Among many educators and reformers, the public school had long been

¹⁴⁴ C. R. Dooley, *Fifth Annual Convention of the National Association of Corporation Schools* (1917), 192. See also Angel Kwolek-Folland’s work on the role of gender in structuring the new corporate occupational structure: Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

¹⁴⁵ Helen Rich Norton, *Department-Store Education*, 13.

¹⁴⁶ Eaves, *Training for Store Service*, 18, 82–83.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 39–42, 46–49.

¹⁴⁸ Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 156; Eaves, *Training for Store Service*, 40–41, 46–49.

understood as an institution to acculturate youth in middle-class social and personal habits. Progressive educators often described public schooling as a way to compensate for the influence (typically cited as negative) of the home, where bad habits, improper speech, untidiness, and social improprieties were acquired. Specialized curriculum including hygiene and physical training provided both health services and instruction in habits of cleanliness and physical activity. Extra-curricular activities including social and athletics clubs were commonly justified as means of fostering positive moral qualities and social cooperation. Even more so than the curriculum, the exemplary model of the teacher was cited as a primary ways to instill moral behavior and social graces.¹⁴⁹ Among members of the Boston School Board, these ideas fueled political controversy over the selection of schoolteachers and metrics of evaluation.¹⁵⁰

While analysis of the school curriculum does not provide direct evidence of what students actually learned, the fact that students sought out this education in high numbers and successfully went on into white-collar work indicates that this curriculum was instrumental in their future occupations. “Liberal” education was thus a highly vocational one: becoming a well-read, well-spoken, well-mannered student was the best form of preparation for white-collar employment. Students sought to acquire the traits that would help them on the job, including appropriate middle class and gender-based behaviors, and it was student demand that drove the development of the curriculum. In addition, schools provided access to new social networks that could supplement or replace kinship and ethnic networks in finding employment. While schools were also differentiated in an educational hierarchy, they enlarged the range of their students’ social contacts.

¹⁴⁹ Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 156; Eaves, *Training for Store Service*, 83.

¹⁵⁰ For some progressive reformers this justified the hiring preference of college-educated women of Massachusetts or New England heritage, as opposed to second generation Irish Normal School graduates, the central issue of Julia Duff’s school board tenure. See “Her Greeting Warm,” and “Is Cheered by 1000 Persons,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 9, 1907, 6.

Extended periods of education, however, did not offer the same benefits to all. First, increased training opportunities encouraged employers to use schools as a sorting device, often based on cultural preferences and prejudices. For example, Mary E. Harrington, in charge of hiring and training employees at the New England Telephone Company (NETC), stopped advertising positions in newspapers because ads attracted “foreigners, illiterate and untidy.” Instead, personal referrals from school officials secured “young ladies of refinement.”¹⁵¹ The growth of schools gave a meritocratic cover to many preferences based on prejudice.

In addition, even if individuals did manage to work their way up the educational ladder, there was no guarantee that they would be employed in white-collar work. Despite the significant inroads of second and third generation European immigrants, some companies maintained policies of excluding employees based on religion or race. Alice O’Meara, an agent of the WEIU’s Appointment Bureau, complained in 1921 of the difficulty of placing Catholic stenographers and bookkeepers, even those “of the best type,” because employers requested Protestant girls only.¹⁵² The NETC, mainly filled with Irish Catholic operators, excluded Jewish applicants until the 1940s.¹⁵³ Virtually no companies would hire African Americans.¹⁵⁴ According to the 1920 census, only 0.3% of all clerks and 0.2% of all sales personnel were black, and a total of six African American women

¹⁵¹ Norwood, *Labor’s Flaming Youth*, 42.

¹⁵² Letter from Alice O’Meara to James J. Phelan, June 3, 1921, Box 9, Folder 82 “General Reports – Policies of the Bureau, 1913-1928” WEIU Records, 1894-1955, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

¹⁵³ One Jewish telephone operator recalled that the hiring process in Boston was controlled by a “couple of sisters named Harrington,” and “if you didn’t come with a recommendation from the Church you couldn’t get by.” The only reason she was hired was because of “a man relieving when I applied.” Managers rationalized their prejudices by claiming their Jewish employees observed too many holidays, they were “slow workers,” and were “known as agitators of the highest type.” Norwood, *Labor’s Flaming Youth*, 42-43. Jewish men and women did however make significant inroads into saleswork. In 1916, about 10%, or 250 employees, at the Filene’s store were Jewish. Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 209. These numbers match general stats in Boston: among all female saleswomen in 1920, 10.8% were Russian, even though Russians made up only 5.6% of the Boston female workforce. Men even more highly represented: 19% of salesmen were Russian, while Russians made up 10% of the Boston male workforce. *IPUMS*, 1920.

¹⁵⁴ Norwood, *Labor’s Flaming Youth*, 42; Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 209.

were employed as telephone operators out of a workforce of nearly 10,000.¹⁵⁵ At the same time, the educational enrollment levels African Americans had been equivalent to the levels of Irish immigrants since 1910.¹⁵⁶ In the realm of white-collar training, education had little effect on employers' discriminatory practices and prejudice.

Aspirations and Realities

Why did men and women aspire to white-collar jobs? Work in offices and stores was cleaner, less arduous, and more prestigious than in other sectors. While upper-class women who came upon hard times “descended” into sales or secretarial work, for many daughters of artisans and working-class immigrants, white-collar employment was a significant and celebrated step into the middle class.¹⁵⁷ Men in particular who began in low-paid entry-level positions expected to rise into higher ranks of management. Some found great pleasure in their jobs as they were, such as one department store saleswoman who found fulfillment in her work with customers: “I was the person who connected them with their dreams, their special saleslady.”¹⁵⁸ Many women worked for income to supplement their family income, only working for a short period before marriage. In addition, white-collar workers were the first to benefit from the wave of “welfare work” initiative undertaken around the turn of the century, characteristic of the largest progressive firms that had elaborate internal bureaucracies of office and sales staff.¹⁵⁹ These innovations included social programs, cafeterias, washrooms, company doctors or nurses, company magazines and newsletters, paid vacations, profit-

¹⁵⁵ *Fourteenth Census of the United States, State Compendium: Massachusetts* (Washington: GPO), 1924, 65-67.

¹⁵⁶ *IPUMS*, 1900-1940.

¹⁵⁷ DeVault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor*; Miriam Cohen, *Workshop to Office: Two Generations of Italian Women in New York City, 1900-1950* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993).

¹⁵⁸ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 211.

¹⁵⁹ Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 171-72.

sharing schemes, promotional ladders, grievances procedures, mutual aid societies, employee associations, as well as training programs.¹⁶⁰ One national study in 1916-1917 found that retail and department stores were much more likely to have welfare and social facilities than average firms.¹⁶¹

Some of these innovations were also created in order to streamline and improve the training process for new employees. Despite its usual association with industrial training, the National Association of Corporation Schools in 1913 was founded by firms primarily interested in training for office and sales work, such as the National Cash Register Company that had developed the earliest schools for salesmen in the 1890s.¹⁶² The New England Telegraph and Telephone Company, an AT&T subsidiary, opened a school for its new telephone operators in January of 1906 on Newbury Street in Boston. In separate rooms equipped with switchboard equipment, a female manager and seven instructors gave lectures, demonstrations, exams, and oversaw practice to about 50 attendees at a time for a four-week course. Students were paid \$2.50 per week while they were instructed in how to operate the switchboard, how to handle receiving and answering calls, and were taught appropriate “phraseology,” as well as “courtesy, secrecy, punctuality, and deportment.”¹⁶³ As employers increasingly hired young men and women with high school or college education, however, on-the-job training focused more narrowly on specific technical skills or selectively

¹⁶⁰ US Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations: Final Report and Testimony*, vol. 3 (Washington, GPO, 1916), 2316. For the development of welfare work, see Sanford M. Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in American Industry, 1900 - 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 39–65, 196–98. 39-65, 196-8.

¹⁶¹ Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 171–72.

¹⁶² Managers of the New York Edison Company’s school for salesman hosted a founding convention for the NACS in New York in January, and in September, the first national convention was hosted by the National Cash Register Company in Dayton, Ohio, which had pioneered a school for cash register salesmen in the 1890s.¹⁶² The bulk of the program of the first few yearly conventions was devoted to training for white-collar staff, including sales work, clerical service, advertising, accounting, financing, purchasing, and business management. This assessment is based on the roll call in 1913, in which members described their own reasons for attending the conventions, as well as the number of official subcommittees devotes to schools for white-collar positions, and the number of speakers on each topic. NACS Annual Convention, Papers, Reports, and Discussions, Dayton, Ohio, 1913; NACS Annual Convention, Philadelphia, 1914.

¹⁶³ “New England Telephone and Telegraph Company,” *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin* 10:6 (December, 1906), 461-2.

grooming future managerial staff. By 1923 the NACS had become the American Management Association, and training was absorbed into new management practices such as systems of transfer and promotion through departments, which both trained new employees and helped cultivate loyalty to the firm.

Department stores like Filene's in Boston developed some of the earliest salesmanship training programs and welfare services for employees. Founded in 1881 by William Filene, a German-Jewish immigrant, Filene's store was turned over to William's sons, Abraham Lincoln Filene and Edward Filene, in 1901. The Filene brothers developed a heightened interest in labor relations after the 1893 depression, and became part of a milieu of Jewish employers and reformers in Boston, including Louis Brandeis, who helped develop some of the most progressive employee representation and training schemes.¹⁶⁴ In 1909, a new Educational Director D. F. Edwards initiated several weeklong salesmanship classes for both new and experienced employees. Courses covered topics such as stock purchasing, approaching customers, completing purchases, and "suggestive salesmanship."¹⁶⁵ Records were also kept of each employee's "efficiency" over time.¹⁶⁶ In subsequent years, Filene's training program was developed to include a research department and training for management positions.¹⁶⁷ These training programs increasingly supplemented work that employees received in schools.

Filene's also famously developed one of the most advanced employee representative schemes, the Filenes Cooperative Association (FCA), which was held up as a model of progressive

¹⁶⁴ George Berkeley notes that A.L. Filene was more active than his brother in the employee relations in the store, but both were committed to their new experiment in industrial democracy. George E. Berkley, *The Filenes* (Boston: Branden Books, 1998), 74.

¹⁶⁵ Mary La Dame, *The Filene Store: A Study of Employes' Relation to Management in a Retail Store* (NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 1930), 395.

¹⁶⁶ The earlier mistake bulletins were replaced by less public "blunder slips," in which executives were to record an employee error and report it to the educational office. The employee was called to the office to sign the slip, "not as a penalty but as a reminder in the future to be more careful to avoid that particular error." *Ibid.*, 396–98.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 399–414.

business practices.¹⁶⁸ The Filene's brothers enlisted Louis Brandeis to draft a constitution for the association in 1903, which gave employees the power to amend company rules "except policies of the business" and elect members to an arbitration board that would mediate worker grievances.¹⁶⁹ The FCA sponsored wide variety of welfare benefits such as sickness and accident benefits, a clinic, a credit union, restaurants and clubrooms, a library, instructional courses, a employee periodical, orchestra and choral club, recreational activities, and pension plans.¹⁷⁰ Employees took advantage of this new body, settling hundreds of grievances and using it to challenge some store policies like closing hours, holiday schedules and dress codes, but both Filenes were disappointed by their employees' apathy.¹⁷¹ When pushed by reformers such as Frank Parsons to give employees representation on the Filene's Board of Directors, Edward Filene claimed that they wouldn't want representation because they weren't interested in power; they only cared about "petty benefits."¹⁷² Scholars have pointed to this example of worker apathy to explain lack of union organizing among white-collar employees.¹⁷³

Despite the many benefits of white-collar employment, it was also the sector with perhaps the most extreme power imbalance between employees and employers. Testimonies before the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations in 1916 revealed a wide range of grievances and employer abuses in department stores across the country. Store employees regularly worked overtime and were not paid for it, despite legislation restricting working hours.¹⁷⁴ Sales workers were on their feet

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 119–20.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 120–23; Allon Gal, *Brandeis of Boston* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980), 60–62; Brandeis uses the FCA as a model for "professional" business management practices in his 1914 address, Louis D. Brandeis, *Business: A Profession* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1914).

¹⁷⁰ La Dame, *The Filene Store*, 200–227.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 139–45, 189–96, 332–33.

¹⁷² Berkley, *The Filenes*, 118–20.

¹⁷³ La Dame, *The Filene Store*, 332.

¹⁷⁴ In New York, breaking the 54-hour law with overtime work was common. As Hilda Svenson, organizer for the Retail Clerks Union of New York testified: "I find that the large department stores in New York City...when a store says it

all day and were not allowed to sit down, and employers ignored legislation mandating seating for store clerks.¹⁷⁵ The “spy system” was adopted by many companies, in which “spotters” were sent into the store to catch and report any employee mistakes, with the lowest-ranked employees suffering the costs.¹⁷⁶ Young clerks were harassed and abused by their supervisors and would not complain for fear of losing their jobs.¹⁷⁷ Employer associations could easily facilitate blacklisting those they took a disliking to, for even small offences like “sassing a floorwalker.”¹⁷⁸ Most companies fiercely resisted any incipient organizing efforts, especially among women and part-time employees, whose value to the employer was precisely their low cost and contingent employment.¹⁷⁹ Silvia Shulman was fired from A. I. Namm & Sons in 1916 after being employed as a sales clerk for

opens at 8:30 and closes at 5:30 it does not mean at all that the employees work only at 8:30 to 5:30...All the girls without exception tell me they have to work more or less overtime, and that they get nothing for it.” US Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations*, 1916, 3:2309. The President of the Retail Clerks Union of New York, Benjamin Gitlow, testified: “From 7 to a quarter after 7, I stood outside of the entrance [to Wanamaker’s store] and counted the number of girls that left the building, and I found out they numbered almost 700...having worked over an hour overtime, and they received nothing for that.” Ibid., 3:2337. As Mary Waxman, an investigator of the Council of Jewish Women and former employee of Gimbels Department store in New York testified, “I usually had to work late before the sales...until about 7 o’clock...and never was paid nothing until I worked until 8:30 or 10 o’clock, when I was given supper money consisting of 35 cents.” Ibid., 3:2276.

¹⁷⁵ Benjamin Gitlow, who had worked several years at Bloomingdales, described how “Every time they got a hint of an inspector coming around Bloomingdale’s Bros...the porters would bring old chairs to the various departments in the stores and would scatter a great abundance of chairs all over the floor...after the inspectors went away the porters were put back on the job to collect the chairs and take them to the warehouses. Any girl found sitting on a chair was rebuked.” US Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations*, 1916, 3:2337.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 3:2340.

¹⁷⁷ “We know of cases of girls who have got to submit to buyers if they want to hold their positions,” Gitlow testified. Ibid., 3:2343.

¹⁷⁸ In 1916 when Agnes Nestor, President of the Women’s Trade Union League of Chicago and President of the International Glove Workers Union, was asked: “The opportunity of a young lady finding employment after being discharged by one store for some small offence would practically mean her discharge in all the avenues of employment in the city of Chicago?” Nestor replies that it “very likely would be.” US Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations: Final Report and Testimony*, vol. 4 (Washington, GPO, 1916), 3385. See also experience of Mary Waxman in New York, US Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations*, 1916, 3:2277–79.

¹⁷⁹ “As John Andrews, writing in the 1911 Report on the Condition of Women and Child wage earners, put it: “the moment she organizes a union and seeks by organization to secure better wages she diminishes or destroys what is to the employer her chief value.” Alice Kessler-Harris, “Where Are the Organized Women Workers?,” *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1/2 (1975): 94.

four years because she “dared to belong” to the retail clerks union.¹⁸⁰ James Mackie was similarly fired from John Wannaker’s Department store.¹⁸¹

Many workers were also skeptical of the range of programs lauded as “welfare work.” Some were pure public relations stunts with very little benefit to the employee.¹⁸² Employers found ways of undercutting any benefits they did provide, such as laying off employees during holidays in order to avoid paying them vacation benefits.¹⁸³ Some companies mandated employees join (and pay dues) to a mutual aid societies or employee associations, without granting them any control over their management or the distribution of their funds.¹⁸⁴ The NETC used its employee monthly magazine to laud those who exemplified diligence, punctuality, and faithfulness to the company, and portray any criticism of the company as destructive or a sign of laziness.¹⁸⁵ Many feared retaliation if they brought grievances forward.¹⁸⁶ These benefits and organizations did not change the structural balance of power that disadvantaged workers, and were often animated by anti-union stances.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁰ US Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations*, 1916, 3:2285.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3:2275. See testimony of Mr. Leslie Graff, executive of B. Altman Company and former secretary of the Retail Dry goods Association in NY. *Ibid.*, 3:2358.

¹⁸² S. Nicholas Schwartz, a former Bloomingdales’ employee, testified that a newspaper feature had been published about a lawn party for Bloomingdale’s employees with ice cream, cake, and lemonade, but in fact the employees had been told to report that morning at the entrance of Central Park, where a photo was quickly snapped, and then were told to get back to work. US Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations*, 1916, 3:2325.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3:2317, 2342.

¹⁸⁴ “I wish, first, to refute the testimony of Hiram P. Bloomingdale...for three years I worked in that store. I was a member of the benefit society...At no time did we receive any accounting of the moneys expended by that society; at no time did we take part in the electing of officers in the society; at no time were we given any say whatever in a meeting, or otherwise, in the doings of the aid society. It was purely compulsory.” *Ibid.*, 3:2337–38.

¹⁸⁵ Norwood, *Labor’s Flaming Youth*, 104.

¹⁸⁶ Speaking generally about department stores, Svenson testified: “They say if it is a good legitimate kick they have they would not dare bring it to the welfare secretary. They fear that they are too close to the firm and it would injure them.” US Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations*, 1916, 3:2316. “You know Hiram C. Bloomingdale stated on the stand that if any clerk had any grievance against the firm they could come to the Bloomingdale members and present their grievances. Nevertheless, when Hiram C. Bloomingdale...stepped into that department, all of the clerks used to run behind the bins or behind the posts...to consider that a girl employee would come up to this man with a personal grievance is something ridiculous.” *Ibid.*, 3:2341–42.

¹⁸⁷ See Jacoby’s account of the National Cash Register Company’s expansion of welfare work immediately after a molder’s union strike in 1901, which followed the new Labor Department’s director Charles U. Carpenter’s philosophy: “The time to stop the trouble is before it begins.” Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy*, 63.

Percy Straus, partner of R. H. Macy & Co., claimed that he was “theoretically favorable to trade-unionism,” but not in his department store.¹⁸⁸ Edward Filene dismissed labor “agitators” as merely interested in “petty privileges,” not recognizing the importance of these bread and butter issues in

his employees’ everyday lives.¹⁸⁹

Average Wages in \$ for Women in Boston, 1880-1925			
	1880	1900	1925
School Teacher		15	40-50
Manager		16	30-60
Stenographer		10	20-25
Clerk	5	7	16-20
Salesperson	6	8	15-20
Cash/bundle girl	2	3	
Telephone Operator	7	8	11-22
Dressmaker	10-15		
Sewing Machine Operative	5-10	6	25
Factory Work "girls"	3	4	16
Domestic Service	\$3 + living	4 + living	15 + living

Repeated social investigations revealed endemic low wages for women in particular. Figure 4.16 depicts estimated average wages for men and women in different occupations in Boston between 1880-1925.¹⁹⁰

Average Wages in \$ for Men in Boston, 1880-1925			
	1880	1900	1925
Lawyer		80	
School Teacher		67	70-100
Executive		70-150	100-200
Manager		30-70	50-100
Clerk	10	12	30-40
Salesperson	10	15	30-40
Errand boys	3	3	
Clothing Cutter	20	20	55
Factory Work "boys"	3	4	
Carpenter	13	15	48
Machinist	18		37
Laborer	8	8	25

Figure 4.16

Sources: see note 190.

¹⁸⁸ US Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations*, 1916, 3:2392.

¹⁸⁹ Berkley, *The Filenes*, 120.

¹⁹⁰ Data for these charts taken from “Comparative Position of Boston Wages, 1870-1898,” *MA Labor Bulletin* No. 9 (January 1899); Carroll D. Wright, *The Working Girls of Boston* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1889); “Mercantile Wages and Salaries,” in *Thirty-Third Annual Report on the Statistics of Labor, Massachusetts*, 1903, 81–129; Chas. F. Pidgin, “The Distribution of Wealth,” *MA Labor Bulletin* 10, no. No. 3 (May 1906): 142–50; “Social Statistics of Working Women,” *MA Labor Bulletin* No. 18 (May 1901); Frederick Orin Bartlett, *One Way Out: A Middle-Class New-Englander Emigrates to America* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1911), 7–10; La Dame, *The Filene Store*, 147.; “Time Rates of Wages and Hours of Labor in MA, 1925” *MA Labor Bulletin* No. 147 (MA, 1926); MA Department of Labor and Industries, “Wages and Hours of Labor: Salaries of Office Employees in MA,” *Monthly Labor Review* 24, no. 141 (1927); Mary H. Tolman, *Positions of Responsibility in Department Stores and Other Retail Selling Organizations* (New York: Bureau of Vocational Information, 1921); *Annual Report of the Business Agent, 1922*, School Doc. 1, (Boston, 1922); “AB College Placements, Jan 1922-Feb 1925” WEIU Additional Records, 1877-2004, Folder 11, Box 9, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

A 1911 WEIU study of a “living wage,” suggested a bare minimum of \$9 per week, with \$12 as merely adequate.¹⁹¹ By contrast, in the department stores of Boston in 1912, over 60% of women over 18 earned less than \$8, and 12% earned less than \$4.¹⁹² On average, saleswomen earned less than needle-workers in store workrooms.¹⁹³ Office workers fared better than sales workers, but of those in the lowest positions as clerks and office girls, 25% earned less than \$8.¹⁹⁴

By the late nineteenth century, some white-collar workers had unions. Many white-collar workers tended to have a strong sense of identity along occupational lines of craft or skill, characteristic of both American artisans and professionals.¹⁹⁵ White-collar workers looked to both trade unions and professional associations as models for their own organization, but for those on the lower ends of the hierarchy, white-collar workers especially looked to the strong gains of union contracts in the trades as models to emulate.¹⁹⁶ Some of the earliest white-collar unions founded in

¹⁹¹ Louise Marion Bosworth, *The Living Wage of Women Workers: A Study of Incomes and Expenditures of 450 Women in the City of Boston* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1911), 10. Rates set by the MA minimum wage commission, founded in 1912, were typically lower than the rates advocated for by the white-collar unions that existed. In 1922 the MA Minimum Wage Commission suggested \$9 as minimum wage for shopgirls, and the Retail Clerks Union launched fierce rebuke in the pages of their magazine. H. J. Conway, “Attempts to Reduce Minimum Wage for Women Workers,” *Retail Clerks International Advocate* 29, no. 7 (July 1922): 15–16.

¹⁹² Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 113–14.

¹⁹³ Susan Benson estimates that salesworkers made 55%-89% of the average wage for needleworkers, although after WWI needleworkers rates declined and these differentials declined. Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 191.

¹⁹⁴ Allinson, *The Public Schools and Women in Office Service*, 113–14. These studies also demonstrated that most women did not work for “pin money,” a common stereotype that helped justified low wages and part-time employment. Rather, employees relied on their salaries to support themselves or their families, but had limited means of advocating for work improvements Bosworth, *The Living Wage of Women Workers*, 5; Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 185. The plight of the poorly-paid shopgirl, and the fear that in her desperation she would resort to prostitution or other immoral behavior, had fueled many women’s reform efforts since the 1890s. In 1890, the Working Women’s Society reported at a New York meeting that “[i]t is simply impossible for any woman to live without assistance on the low salary a saleswoman earns. . . . It is inevitable that they must in many instances resort to evil.” Val Marie Johnson, “‘The Rest Can Go to the Devil’: Macy’s Workers Negotiate Gender, Sex, and Class in the Progressive Era,” *Journal of Women’s History* 19, no. 1 (2007): 34.

¹⁹⁵ In Kocka’s study, this is contrasted to identification as a “class” of white-collar workers that characterized German white-collar identity. Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 60–64.

¹⁹⁶ The line between these two forms was also blurry. Some of the earliest organizations among white-collar workers were in fact among employers banding together for common early closing times. See Marten Estey, “Early Closing: Employer-Organized Origin of the Retail Labor Movement,” *Labor History* 13, no. 4 (Fall 1972): 560. Both craft unions and profession associations relied on strategies of regulating entry to their field, but professions through a certifying process regulated by member practitioners, whereas unions relied on negotiating contracts with employers. As subordinate wage-earners, white-collar workers were in a structural position closer to industrial workers in this respect. Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 75–79.

the late nineteenth century were organizations of retail clerks, who commonly worked store hours from 6am to 10-11pm and sought earlier closing times. The Retail Clerks International Protective Association (RCIPA) offered benefits for sickness, death, and unemployment and continued to advocate for early-closing times as well as a 10-hour work day, Sundays off, a minimum wage, compensation for overtime, paid vacations, equal pay for men and women, and closed shop contracts.¹⁹⁷ While RCIPA only organized 5-10% of retail clerks nationally, it grew from 4,200 members in 1890 to 50,000 by 1903.¹⁹⁸ Other early white-collar unions included the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks founded in 1899, influenced by the gains of organized locomotive engineers, trainmen, conductors and firemen in the railroad industry, although their national membership did not exceed 6,000 members before WWI.¹⁹⁹ These organizations, however, were not hospitable institutions for all. Gender divisions plagued white-collar organizing. Despite official openness to women's unions by the AFL, men's locals typically sought to keep their workplace exclusively male. They opposed efforts of employers to hire women to undercut wages, and demanded a "family wage," premised on a male breadwinner model of the family. The strength of emergent white-collar unions and the extent of female exclusion were often linked: railway clerks had among the highest rates of unionization, some of the highest wages, and remained male-dominated much longer than other clerical workers.²⁰⁰ The RCIPA similarly drew much of its strength from predominantly male

¹⁹⁷ Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 56–59.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁹⁹ Harry Henig, *The Brotherhood of Railway Clerks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 10–11, 284.

²⁰⁰ Railway clerks also relied on internal promotion, rather than external hiring of educated workers, for much longer than other clerical workers. Stuart Morris, "Stalled Professionalism: The Recruitment of Railway Officials in the United States, 1885–1940," *Business History Review* 47, no. 3 (September 1973): 317–334; Srole, "Feminization of Clerical Work," 659; C. Breed, "Why Do Not College Men Go Into Railroading?," *Railway Age (1918-1988)* 68, no. 13 (1920): 1049. Lisa Fine also notes that the Office Employee Association in Chicago, which organized mainly clerical workers in the civil service, was predominantly male. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper*, 135.

drug clerks and grocery clerks.²⁰¹ White-collar unions, as in the trades, were often based on exclusion to protect those who were currently employed.

Some women white-collar workers were able to use labor unions for their own purposes. Women's labor historians have challenged assumptions about women's "unorganizability" due to lack of interest, commitment, and sense of identity attached to their work. As Susan Porter Benson has argued, many working women in sales and office jobs felt a sense of craft identity and pride in their work. They did face obstacles entering into heavily male craft unions, however, and early women's labor organizing relied on alliances with middle class women progressive organizations like the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL).²⁰² Women settlement house leaders became the basis of support for new women's unions, and while the class differences between women reformers and immigrant working women spawned tensions of their own, this alliance helped fuel the major successes of female white-collar workers in Boston.²⁰³

One of the most successful was the organization of women telephone operators in Boston between 1912 and 1923, the only successful entirely woman-led national labor organization in the early twentieth century, almost entirely young, high-school educated Irish Catholic women. The move toward organizing began in March of 1912 in Boston, when a group of twenty operators of the New England Telephone Company gathered to discuss a strike in response to wage reductions, split work schedules, excessive hours, night work, unpaid overtime and a harsh penalty system.

²⁰¹Marten Estey, "The Grocery Clerks: Center of Retail Unionism," *Industrial Relations* 7, no. 3 (May 1968): 254; Selvin describes attempts of employers to hire women to undercut organizing in the years before WWI, but also successful organization of women by 1914 in San Francisco. David F. Selvin, *Union Profile: The Fifty Years of Grocery Clerks Union, Local 648* (San Francisco: Grocery Clerks Union, 1960), 21.

²⁰² Indeed, it was white-collar worker organizers who initially brokered the first meeting between the WTUL and the AFL: Samuel Gompers sent both Max Morris, AFL-Executive Council member and RICPA delegate, and John O'Brien, President of the RICPA, to attend the early meetings of the WTUL. Allen Davis, "The Women's Trade Union League: Origins and Organizations," *Labor History* 5 (1964): 11.

²⁰³ See Deutsch's excellent chapter about the "intricate dance, each party wary of the other's attempt to lead" that characterized the relationship between settlement house reformers and wage-earning women, Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 161-219.

Upon approaching the WTUL, secretary Mary Gillespie advised them to organize a union and put them in touch with the AFL-affiliated International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), which represented men's telephone linemen. Within days the IBEW issued a charter to the Boston Telephone Operators Union, as a sub-local of the men's lineman's local. As one member of the union remembered: "The organization came easy because conditions were so bad it was practically spontaneous...As soon as [each exchange] heard...they came in from everywhere to join the union."²⁰⁴ The militancy of the women-led Telephone Department of the IBEW peaked in April of 1919, when nearly 8,000 telephone operators in New England struck and paralyzed telephone service in five states.²⁰⁵ At this date, an impressive 70% of all telephone operators in Massachusetts were unionized.²⁰⁶ Multiple unique features allowed these white-collar workers to achieve the success they did. Telephone operating was a highly specified, entirely female occupation that did not compete with men's jobs, and these Irish women were the daughters and sisters of many Irish trade unionists.²⁰⁷ They faced a single employer that controlled telephone service across New England, and there was enormous public pressure on the company not to allow a strike. Boston's male labor unions, including Irish police unions, who would rely on the support of telephone operators during their own strike a few months later, offered strong solidarity. The female WTUL leadership helped frame the media portrayal of these women-unionists as respectable young, educated women suffering at the hands of employers, and the telephone operators enjoyed public support through

²⁰⁴ Norwood, *Labor's Flaming Youth*, 102.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 181, 196–97.; Fourteenth Census of the United States, Massachusetts Compendium, (Washington: GPO, 1924), 62-67; "Statistics of Labor Organizations in MA, 1918-1920," *Annual Report of the Statistics of Labor, 1921* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1921), 27

²⁰⁶ "Statistics of Labor Organizations in MA, 1918-1920," 27; *Fourteenth Census of the United States, State Compendium: Massachusetts* (Washington: GPO), 1924, 65-67. There were no male telephone operators listed in the census; it was an exclusively female occupation.

²⁰⁷ Irish male trade unionists typically did not support Jewish or Italian women activists in garment industry, for instance. Norwood, *Labor's Flaming Youth*, 186.

their strike.²⁰⁸ Finally, an important factor in these women's ability to organize was their shared youth culture and shared high school experience. However, like other unions in the aftermath of WWI, telephone operators faced an aggressive open-shop drive, and union membership fell drastically through the 1920s.²⁰⁹ Only in the late 1930s and 1940s would white-collar unions regain significant strength.²¹⁰

Workers did find ways to exert power even without unions. Sales workers collectively enforced "the stint," or an informal quota of sales per day, among their co-workers, which thwarted the management tactic of incentive payment schemes to increase worker productivity.²¹¹ Even if organizing campaigns did not succeed in securing contracts, many won temporary improvements through the threat of unionization.²¹² However, office and sales workers were always under threat of replacement. As one industrial relations specialist wrote in the early 1920s: "Every clerk and every employer knows that...the places of the lowest orders of clerical workers can be filled more readily than that of almost any other industrial class."²¹³ Even a strong "work culture" could not protect workers from arbitrary decisions of management.²¹⁴ The continued expansion of education fueled

²⁰⁸ They especially played up the grievance of night work, which they argued was particularly dangerous and unhealthy for women. Ibid., 106. Feminist historians have debated the implications of protective legislation for women and gendered appeals for labor regulation, including night work. See Alice Kessler-Harris, "The Paradox of Motherhood: Night Work Restrictions in the United States," in *Protecting Women: Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Nancy Woloch, *A Class by Herself: Protective Laws for Women Workers, 1890s-1990s* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015); Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 19-63; Ava Baron, "Protective Labor Legislation and the Cult of Domesticity," *Journal of Family Issues* 2, no. 1 (1981): 25.

²⁰⁹ Norwood, *Labor's Flaming Youth*, 284-93.

²¹⁰ Many male and female trade unionists would continue their labor activism through the 1920s, laying the groundwork for a reemergence of telephone operator organizing after the Great Depression. Ibid., 302-3.

²¹¹ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 248-57.

²¹² US Commission on Industrial Relations, *Industrial Relations*, 1916, 4:3382.; Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 216

²¹³ Edward Cowdrick, *Manpower in Industry* (NY: H. Holt & Company, 1924), 154.

²¹⁴ The concept Benson uses to refer to "the ideology and practice with which workers stake out a relatively autonomous sphere of action on the job," among saleswomen, as well as a central concept to new labor historians attention to the strategies of resistance among employees under industrial capitalism. Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 228; Herbert George Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York:

their employers' capacity to hire replacements. As employees flocked to new white-collar jobs, growing from one eighth to nearly one third of the total Boston workforce within decades, this expansion also shifted the employment structure towards jobs with the least amount of worker control.

The Consolidation of a Credentialed White-Collar Hierarchy: 1917-1940

WWI and its aftermath hastened many of the transformations already underway in the first decades of the twentieth century. Wartime production needs increased employment opportunities but also encouraged employers to adopt new labor-saving technologies such as the cash register which eliminated many jobs on the lower-end of the management ladder.²¹⁵ White-collar workers did not benefit from wartime labor union gains, and lost more in the immediate post-war recession compared to their unionized counterparts in industry.²¹⁶ Post-war commentators highlighted these disparities in bargaining power: "In many a corporation the unlearned toiler in mine or factory receives a wage greater than that of the clerk, and enjoys, moreover, superior facilities for bringing his wants to the attention of the management."²¹⁷ The term "white-collar" first came into popular usage at the close of the war, especially as part of the phrase "white-collar slave."²¹⁸ *The Adding Machine*, a play by Elmer L. Rice first staged in 1923, exemplified the plight of the white-collar slave. The main character, a frustrated bookkeeper named Mr. Zero, worked adding accounts for 25 years

Vintage Books, 1977); Brian Greenberg, *Worker and Community: Response to Industrialization in a Nineteenth Century American City, Albany, New York, 1850-1884* (New York: SUNY Press, 1985).

²¹⁵ Eaves, *Training for Store Service*, 57. Some employers codified age limits into their employment policies. La Dame, *The Filene Store*, 94.

²¹⁶ Cowdrick, *Manpower in Industry*, 155.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

²¹⁸ Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 158.

and despite his aspirations of promotion, never had the courage to face his boss. He was fired unexpectedly when a new adding machine was acquired on the advice of an “efficiency expert” to perform his work more cheaply. While *The Adding Machine* exemplifies to an even more exaggerated degree the gendered tropes of white-collar impotence found in Mills, many office and sales workers faced a similar precarity of employment to that which Rice dramatized.²¹⁹ A minority of white-collar worker channeled this discontent into labor activism, participating in the wartime protest and organizing that peaked in a wave of national strikes in 1919, including the successful telephone operators’ strike. However, taking part in the anti-labor and anti-immigrant Red Scare of the 1920s, managers cracked down harder on any incipient organizing drives and used gender, ethnicity, and race and means of dividing workers.

²¹⁹ Mr. Zero is just as frustrated with his home life as he is with his job, and his wife is unsympathetic to his plight: “If you was any kind of man you’d have a decent job by now, an’ I’d be getting some comfort out of life” Ibid., 330 fn. 30.

High schools, after a temporary drop in enrollment during war years, boomed again in the 1920s. Commercial subjects continued to drive the process, enrolling over half of all public high school students through the 1920s.²²⁰ The vast majority of students who went to work after

graduating, whether or not

they had taken commercial

subjects in high school,

pursued white-collar office or

sales work.²²¹

Correspondingly, of white-

Prepares You

for a paying position —and provides the position

For nearly forty years **Burdett College** has been training young people for the best paying positions in business. The number of its graduates and students in Greater Boston exceeds 26,000. They include Executives, Accountants, Stenographers, Correspondents, Commercial Teachers, Bookkeepers, Secretaries, Merchants, Public Officials. For them a Burdett business training was the stepping stone to success.

Burdett training is individualized. Each student advances according to his personal ability. Classroom theory is supplemented by actual business practice—under characteristic business conditions and according to modern business methods.

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<p>BURDETT COLLEGE FACTS</p> <p>Largest of its kind in New England; 2322 students; 68 officers, faculty and assistants; 305 typewriters and other office machines; 193 leading business men and women and educators take part in the Laboratory of Business Demonstrations under the direction of N. C. Fowler Jr; 2614 positions offered Burdett graduates and competent students the past year.</p>	<p>SUBJECTS TAUGHT</p> <p>Shorthand Accountancy Auditing—Theory and Practice Bookkeeping Business Arithmetic Business Correspondence Business Penmanship Business Spelling Civics Commercial and Industrial Geography Commercial Law Economics</p>	<p>Wonderful Opportunities for Women</p> <p>The business world needs YOUR help. We will prepare you for a responsible position and obtain the position.</p>
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Fall Term Begins Tuesday, September 3

Which Catalogue Shall We Send You—Day or Night School?

NO INCREASE IN DAY TUITION RATE

BURDETT COLLEGE

Largest of Its Kind in New England

Telephones
Beach 1765, 1766.
1767 or 1768

18 Boylston St., Cor. Washington St., Boston

Classified Ad, *Boston Daily Globe*, August 18, 1918, 28

Figure 4.17: Burdett College

²²⁰ In 1928 in the largest central high schools downtown, nearly 75% of women and 40% of men enrolled in commercial classes. In the co-ed district high school in East Boston, a working-class suburb of primarily Irish families, 57% of men and 86% of women took commercial courses, while in Brighton High School, a wealthier suburb, only 14% of men and 53% of women enrolled in these classes. *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1928*, 49-50; *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1928*, 9.

²²¹ Of male graduates who went to work in 1921, about 20% pursued clerical work, and a total of 50% entered business pursuits, as salesmen, business executives, managers, and proprietors. Female graduates entered business at even higher rates: in 1921, 85% of those who went to work pursued office or “mercantile” (sales) work; in 1926, 95% pursued office or store work. *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1926*, 192; *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1928*, 88, 93.

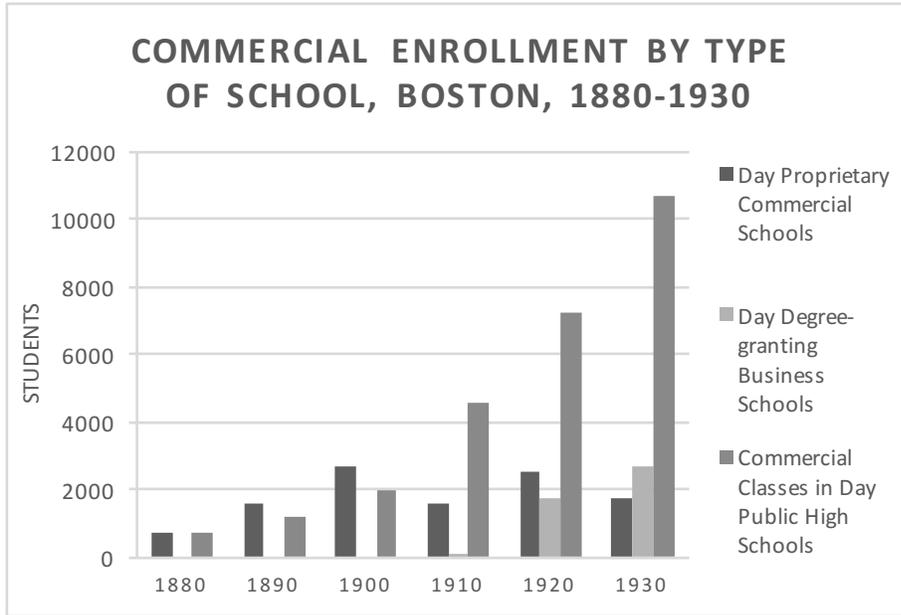


Figure 4.18

Sources: *Report of the Commissioner of Education* (Washington D.C: GPO) 1880-1910; *Biennial Survey of Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1920-30; *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1880-1930*.

collar employees, especially women, an increasing number were high school graduates.²²² Proprietary commercial schools were squeezed from the bottom by surging public high school enrollment.

Some were forced to

close, like Comer's

Commercial School in

1925.²²³ Others launched renewed advertising campaigns, doubling down on their guarantees of success, and pitched themselves to high school graduates who sought advanced practical business training. The Boston School for Secretaries was founded in 1917 as a branch of the Katherine Gibbs chain of secretarial schools, which required a high school education or "equivalent" by 1922 and marketed itself as a finishing school for a more exclusive clientele of female secretaries.²²⁴ Bryant &

²²² As mentioned, WWI had helped eliminate many positions for young people, decreasing the opportunity cost for students to attend and finish high school. A 1920 study found 60% of saleswomen and 80% of female clerks and bookkeepers under 21 employed in Boston's department stores had either graduated high school or left school in their senior year. Eaves, *Training for Store Service*, 119. Of course, many older employees had not received as much training, which kept the average level of education lower.

²²³ Charles W. Parton, *From Sanderson's to Alley's: A Biography of the West Tisbury General Store* (Barnardsville, NC: Charles William Parton, 1992), 31.

²²⁴ Porter Sargent, *The Handbook of American Private Schools* (Boston: P. Sargent., 1922), 328, 804; Katherine Gibbs, *Katherine Gibbs Handbook of Business English* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1985), vii; Rose Doherty, *Katherine Gibbs: Beyond White Gloves* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014).

Stratton students were 95% high school graduates by 1933.²²⁵ As the ranks of proprietary schools continued to be principally female, degree-granting institutions also developed their business curriculum for a more exclusive class of male business leaders, squeezing proprietary schools from the top. Public and degree-granting schools thus consolidated their dominance over proprietary schools in the 1920s, depicted in Figure 4.18.

These institutional types mapped onto a steeply gendered hierarchy. Women continued to fill the lowest positions: based on the findings of a 1926 study of office workers in MA, nearly all women office workers were confined to the \$14-\$30 range, while the majority of men were employed in the \$30-\$50+ range.²²⁶ The structural limitations of education, however, did not hinder the strong belief in social mobility through education. Educators and philanthropists continued to advocate for more advanced training, which continued to have broad popular support. Frank Thompson, elected Superintendent of Schools in 1918, used his position of authority to promote the expansion of advanced commercial education.²²⁷ The women's Boston Clerical School curriculum was revised and lengthened to provide collegiate level courses, such that by 1928 nearly all of its students were high school graduates and it had "veritably become a junior college."²²⁸ High school cooperative programs were extended, such as the "Alternative Store-and-School Plan" in the women's High School of Practical Arts in 1921, in conjunction with large department stores, and a "Daily Short-Hour Plan" in the Roxbury High School in 1927.²²⁹ In 1933, the men's High School of

²²⁵ Bryant & Stratton Commercial School of Boston, *Information for School Principals and Instructors*, 1933, 6, Bryant & Stratton School Pamphlets, Widener Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

²²⁶ *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1928*, 79.

²²⁷ Thompson was also a strong advocate for a free public state college, which he saw as increasingly necessary as more students graduated from high school and sought further training. Here, the public schools, as well as organized labor in Boston, were at odds with the interest of private colleges and universities, the leaders of which thwarted legislative plans to open a free state college numerous times. See Chapter 3 for more detail on the effort to open a state college in Boston and the founding of the Boston Trade Union College. *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1921*, 20.

²²⁸ *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1928*, 47.

²²⁹ *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1920*, 13; *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1937*, 139.

Commerce began to offer up to 2 years of college-level business education for its high school graduates.²³⁰

While the onset of the Great Depression did not hurt white-collar employees as much as their industrial counterparts, white-collar workers still faced reduced wages, layoffs, and many cutbacks in welfare policies.²³¹ Despite new organizing efforts, however, unions remained only a small percentage of overall white-collar employees.²³² Educational credentials, which had enabled many workers to enter new positions, became more culturally and economically salient during the Depression. As young people chose to remain in school longer, another high school boom through the 1930s definitively turned the comprehensive public high schools into a mass institution and common youth experience.²³³ Top college and universities weathered the depression fairly well, and less-prestigious proprietary business colleges either closed, launched invigorated advertising campaigns, or sought to morph into degree-granting institutions themselves.²³⁴ These institutions increasingly mapped onto and reinforced an administrative hierarchy. The number of top managers

²³⁰ *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1937*, 134.

²³¹ Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 189; Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 197, 219. The Boston school committee touted that 40% of the graduates of their salesmanship courses in the High School of Practical Arts or Roxbury High School lost no time at work through the depression, a much higher record than industrial graduates. *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1937*, 139-140.

²³² The RICPA (AFL) grew from 5,000 members nationally in 1933 to 73,500 by 1940 – a growth of 1,400% in less than a decade. The United Retail and Wholesale Employees of America (URWEA, a CIO union) grew to 47,000 by 1940. However these numbers still comprised only a few percentage points of overall white-collar employees. Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 214–16, 234–35.

²³³ As part of New Deal legislation, federal funding for commercial education was granted for the first time. The 1936 George Deen Act made \$41,000 available for Massachusetts for teacher training, cooperative courses, and extension training for full-time employees in “distributive occupations.” *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1937*, 140-41.

²³⁴ Fisher College, a Boston business college founded in 1903, first pursued degree-granting power from the Massachusetts legislature during the Great Depression. It adopted characteristic collegiate features such as selective enrollment, residential dormitories, and dropped its “guarantee” of positions. During the nearly three-decade-long wait to gain this power, Fisher established a partnership with Northeastern University through which Fisher students could acquire college credit. Renamed Fisher Junior College in 1952, it finally received degree-granting power in 1957. Fisher’s trajectory indicates not only the long persistence required for proprietary schools to break into the elite field of degree-granting institutions, but also the pressure on these schools to conform to the standardized educational models these elite institutions had shaped. Scott Adams Fisher, “The Development and Recession of the Private Junior College Including Fisher Junior College: A Case Study” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, 1983), 1–85.

with academic or special training grew rapidly during these years.²³⁵ This trend fueled a growing consciousness of the distinction between white-collar workers and their managerial supervisors, but also may have encouraged further aspirations among low white-collar workers themselves.²³⁶ In particular, the 1930s marked new inroads of the families of immigrants into office work. In Boston over the course of the decade, Russian Jewish women grew from 9% to 15% of stenographers; Italian women grew from 2.5% to over 7%, and Irish women were overrepresented for the first time in this occupation, making up 21%. Similarly, Russian Jewish and Italian male clerks grew from 3% to nearly 10%.²³⁷ Nationally, immigrant experiences of advancement into white-collar positions fostered optimism about achieving comparatively steady employment and, for some, expectations for further advancement, rather than fuel discontent with the declining relative status of these occupations.²³⁸

Conclusion

The burgeoning growth of corporate bureaucracies was made possible by the immense growth of both private and public business training institutions. Unlike in the conflict between employers and employees over control of industrial training, there was widespread political consensus about the provision of white-collar training among students, parents, employers, politicians, social reformers, philanthropists, public school officials, and university leaders. Rather than hinder expansion,

²³⁵ Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 219.

²³⁶ While Kocka's study concludes that American white-collar workers never developed the far-right inclinations of their German counterparts during the 1930s, he does find that political preferences split along two fault lines, between the top third and a middle group of skilled blue-collar and white-collar, and between this middle group and lower group of immigrants and African Americans. The NLRB ruling exempting salaried employees from the right to organize also deepened the division between management and workers. *Ibid.*, 220, 244–47.

²³⁷ *IPUMS* 1930, 1940.

²³⁸ Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, 249; Bjelopera, *City of Clerks*, 115–41.

competition between rival purveyors of this training fueled the rapid growth of private and public options. While demand for training was initially met by entrepreneurs in the private sector, the public sector grew and quickly took on the responsibility of training thousands of white-collar workers for new jobs in offices and stores. Young people, and young women in particular, used these institutions to learn technical skills as well as middle-class norms and behaviors. This training enabled many to enter lucrative fields of employment, on average with better working conditions and higher status than factory or service alternatives.

The rapidly growing supply of high school students also allowed firms to build up a massive corps of office staff and sales personnel, and for the majority of those at the bottom, keep wages low and power differentials high. In particular, the majority of female employees were contingent workers paid small wages. For many reformers and philanthropists, the best solution to the plight of the white-collar worker was further education, which would provide employees with the skills they needed to compete more successfully in the labor market. At the same time, this expansion fueled a steep credentialed ladder, with a small managerial elite using access to even higher educational credentials at degree-granting colleges and universities as a means of controlling access to these top positions.

Given the persistence of an unregulated and “exploitative” field of for-profit education into the present, this chapter also highlights the way the fastest growing sector of schools reflected demands for job training. Despite liberal educators repeated laments of the commercialization or vocationalization of schooling through the twentieth century, schools have always served a vocational function and their phenomenal growth in this period was due to the vocational benefits they offered to students, particularly those entering white-collar employment. For-profit schools, similarly, have only ever been lucrative business ventures when they have capitalized on student demand, and aspirations, to improve their employment opportunities. While many of these schools

were, and are, indeed shams that used false advertising to take advantage of students, they also were some of the few institutions offering useful training opportunities accessible to women and working class students. This insight has important implications for continued attempts to regulate this sector. The most effective means of “regulation” historically was not primarily via legislative policies, but rather by replacing them with free public alternatives. The public high school effectively usurped the student market of these schools, leaving a small proportion vying with prestigious colleges and universities. As higher education becomes the norm in the twentieth and twenty-first century, and the for-profit sector flourishes by appealing to students’ economic insecurity, free public alternatives are increasingly necessary.

At the same time, this chapter comes with a cautionary tale about education as a reform strategy. It has historically provided many workers with the type of skills and training that employers want. However, it has largely followed employer demands, which means that education did not help those who face prejudices or discrimination in the hiring process, and had very little capacity to shape specific occupations or the labor market along different lines. Large public educational expenditure effectively subsidizes employers without gaining any structural power over labor conditions or the terms of employment, ultimately bolstering the power of those in control of the hiring process.

This chapter illuminates how education came to be loaded with such high expectations, and its ideological and cultural consequences. These expectations were based on the real, lived experience of many working class men and women, especially second or third generation immigrants, who took advantage of free and effective commercial training opportunities that allowed them to be the first in their families to access white-collar occupations. The success of these students, as well as the political support of a range of constituencies, perpetuated the notion that education was the best means of social mobility and best public policy to address the economic

conditions of a new industrial economy. The abundance of workers competing for positions and advancement with diminishing power in their workplaces, however, helped individualize responses to workplace grievances, rather than foster collective modes of engagement. An expanded educational hierarchy was also increasingly linked to a steep corporate managerial ladder. In response to rising high school enrollment levels and the ratcheting up of educational credentials, a new managerial elite sought to maintain their position through the use of college and university credentials. It is to the creation and consolidation of this elite professional class that we turn to in the final chapter.

Chapter 5

Professionalizing Projects and the Making of a Credentialed Elite

“The Great Octopus is there with its crimson tentacles reaching from Committee Room to Committee Room, from the halls of the legislation to the Governor’s office, playing its pawns in the great game of legislation. And the searchlight plays not only upon the heights of Beacon Hill; but over the State itself and discloses who controls our public schools...our State Boards and all things educational in Massachusetts, to the furtherance of class distinctions that even now threaten the life of the Republic.”

-Gleason L. Archer, Boston, Mass., December 1, 1915¹

Introduction

Gleason Archer, the founder of a proprietary evening law school in Boston in 1906, spent his career fighting against what he considered the educational establishment of Massachusetts, controlled by the crimson octopus: Harvard University. For Archer, efforts to restrict schools like his own were evidence of a class war against the sons and daughters of Boston’s immigrants and lower classes. Archer’s extravagant rhetoric of victimization might misleadingly mask the historical successes of schools like his own. These schools played a powerful and neglected role in reshaping the landscape of training for the professions in the early twentieth century. In so doing, however, they fueled the elaboration of a credentialed ladder that structured social inequality under a meritocratic guise.

This chapter explores the political contestation that restructured pathways into Boston’s professional elite between 1880 and 1940. It focuses on three cases: law, education, and business. While these “professionalizing projects” differed in important respects, this chapter draws out the

¹ Gleason Leonard Archer, *The Educational Octopus: A Fearless Portrayal of Men and Events in the Old Bay State, 1906-1915* (Boston: Gleason L. Archer, 1915), 8.

similarities in the ways access into these professions was transformed.² In the late nineteenth century, an informal apprenticeship alongside a practitioner was the dominant form of training for the professions. Only in the field of teaching was formal schooling beyond high school typical; in none of these occupations was a college degree required. However, as law, education, and business expanded alongside a burgeoning industrial economy, growing constituencies sought access to these fields. New educational entrepreneurs in the private and, in the case of business and education, the public sector, launched schools that provided training and crucial social networks to these constituencies who could not afford or access traditional colleges and universities: middle class, second- and third-generation immigrants, and women. The expansion of new schools from below, as well as the increasing representation of immigrants in the economy and politics, provoked Boston elites and traditional colleges and universities to seek new strategies to maintain their status. Through alumni networks, professional associations, and the state, these groups helped create new forms of accreditation, elevating their own institutions to the gold standard of prestige that indirectly pressured other institutions to conform. Schools, driven from the bottom up in a credentialed race to the top, became the primary institutional pathway into the professions. The college degree became a coveted marker of status and prestige.³ In this race, however, elite institutions consolidated a monopoly on entry into most lucrative jobs, shaping a steeply differentiated educational hierarchy. Elite universities channeled their predominantly white, male, Protestant graduates into the top positions in corporate law, finance, and educational administration, while women's colleges,

² I borrow Magali Larson's term "professionalizing project" to describe the many efforts to elevate the status of occupations through increased educational requirements, as each was forged historically through struggles over control of particular sets of practices and forms of knowledge. Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: Monopolies of Competence and Sheltered Markets* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012); I also draw on the work of Julia Evetts, "The Sociological Analysis of Professionalism Occupational Change in the Modern World," *International Sociology* 18, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 395–415; and David P. Baker, "Forward and Backward, Horizontal and Vertical: Transformation of Occupational Credentialing in the Schooled Society," *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 29, no. 1 (January 2011): 5–29.

³ While 58% of those listed in *Who's Who in America* in 1899 were college graduates, 75% were by 1940. Cedric Larson, *Who - Sixty Years of American Eminence: The Story of Who's Who in America* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1958), 240.

proprietary schools, and public institutions channeled their female, second and third-generation immigrant graduates into subordinate positions on the professional ladder.

While the high number of private institutions in Boston was distinctive, its elite colleges and universities played a leading role in facilitating professional networks and setting professional standards across the country. This narrative thus places the politics of education at the center of a national process of American elite formation in the progressive era, and explains the origin of the form of credential-based social inequality that continues to structure the American political economy. Despite the fundamental role of education in training the new architects of the corporate economy and bureaucratic state in the early twentieth century, historians of this period continue to leave education almost unmentioned.⁴ This narrative also reinterprets the history of higher education and the professions as one fundamentally shaped by labor market politics. The distinction between liberal education and vocational education has deeply influenced the historiography of higher education. Many paint a declension narrative of the “vocalization” of higher education, pegged at various points in the twentieth century.⁵ Instead, I argue that higher education has always effectively been vocational for elite occupations. Additionally, many histories of the modern university focus their attention on reforms wrought by the emergence of scientific research and new

⁴ Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977); Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Leon Fink, *The Long Gilded Age: American Capitalism and the Lessons of a New World Order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). Fink devotes a chapter to the university intellectuals who shaped ideas about the American political economy, but does not look at the role of schools as training institutions.

⁵ Starting with Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1918). More recent examples include: Elizabeth Popp Berman, *Creating the Market University: How Academic Science Became an Economic Engine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Ellen Schrecker, *The Lost Soul of Higher Education: Corporatization, the Assault on Academic Freedom, and the End of the American University* (New York: New Press, 2010); William Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2014); David O. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 64.

academic disciplines.⁶ I argue that while scientific innovation was central to reforms among elite professional schools in the 1870s and 1880s, by the turn of the century the links forged between liberal arts colleges and professional schools to professional and economic elites through growing networks of alumni is perhaps the more critical story in understanding the social and economic role of the modern university in the twentieth century.⁷ Marxist interpretations of the history of higher education have drawn the most explicit links between universities and economic elites; in these narratives, universities usher in a new era of corporate capitalism.⁸ However, these histories tend to paint a top-down narrative of universities as the enablers of class dominance or social control. I argue instead that the primary driver of higher education was students' own aspirations, from the bottom up, for schooling that would help them enter developing and profitable sectors of employment.⁹ These students were predominantly women and middle-to-lower-class immigrants; thus, despite their marginalization historically and historiographically, these populations were critical to institutional strategies to shape the status of credentials and professional work.¹⁰ Through their

⁶ Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: A. Knopf, 1962); Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Roger L. Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge: The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Andrew Jewett, *Science, Democracy, and the American University: From the Civil War to the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁷ Colin Burke takes a similar student- and alumni-centered approach in his study of higher education, although focused on the nineteenth century. Colin Burke, *American Collegiate Populations: A Test of the Traditional View* (New York: NYU Press, 1982).

⁸ David F. Noble, *America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Clyde W. Barrow, *Universities and the Capitalist State: Corporate Liberalism and the Reconstruction of American Higher Education, 1894-1928* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); A non-Marxist approach that explores the mutual influence of universities and corporations since the nineteenth century is Christopher Newfield, *Ivy and Industry: Business and the Making of the American University, 1880-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁹ This is similar to David Levine's focus on student aspirations, although Levine focuses on degree-granting institutions in isolation from the wider ecology of schools, and only begins his study with WWI, whereas I would argue earlier development are central to understanding the subsequent success of American colleges in American society. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940*.

¹⁰ As Mary Dzuback has argued, "gender is the central story of the history of higher education." I agree that gender was the most blatantly observable dynamic shaping higher education; I also complement this story with an analysis of race, ethnicity, and class dynamics. Mary Ann Dzuback, "Gender and the Politics of Knowledge," *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 171-95.

rising enrollments in proprietary schools and as professional practitioners, they provoked traditional elite colleges and universities to reorient themselves toward the new corporate economy.

“Professions” were thus created historically through the marriage of elite university education and occupations that were central or peripheral to the corporate elite of the early twentieth century.¹¹

The false dichotomy between liberal and vocational education has also contributed to a historiographical divide between histories of the modern university and histories of the wide range of competing proprietary and public schools that were, in fact, essential to their development.¹² Histories of proprietary schools tend to adopt the long-held perspective of their degree-granting competitors: that these schools were exploitative, career-oriented, and inferior to collegiate education.¹³ While many of these schools were indeed fraudulent (and continue to be so to this day), many were some of the only opportunities for immigrants and women to access professional training and professional networks.¹⁴ As access to these schools allowed immigrants and women to

¹¹ Scholars have excavated the details of particular professions development, including the three cases I study. However, many still have yet to explain the historical development of professions within a wider political field of contestation. Theoretical analyses of the professions, many of which I draw on, can also be developed through close historical reconstruction. William R. Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers: A Study in the Clash of Professional Cultures* (New York: New York University Press, 1978); Jurgen Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Rakesh Khurana, *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands: The Social Transformation of American Business Schools and the Unfulfilled Promise of Management as a Profession* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Andrew Delano Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism*; Anne Witz, *Professions and Patriarchy* (London: Routledge, 1992).

¹² Christine Ogren has argued that the historiography of higher education still largely remains in institutional “silos.” Ogren, “Sites, Students, Scholarship, and Structures: The Historiography of American Higher Education in the Post-Revisionist Era,” in William J. Reese and John L. Rury, *Rethinking the History of American Education*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 196.

¹³ Robert H. Reid, *American Degree Mills, a Study of Their Operations and of Existing and Potential Ways to Control Them*. (Washington: American Council on Education, 1959); A. J. Angulo, *Diploma Mills: How for-Profit Colleges Stiffed Students, Taxpayers, and the American Dream* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).

¹⁴ Many studies have examined how the professionalization of medicine in the late 19th century, and the role of the Flexner report in particular, severely reduced the number of African American medical schools, African American physicians, and thus access to medical care within the African American community. See “Four African American Proprietary Medical Colleges, 1895-1900,” in Todd Lee Savitt, *Race and Medicine in Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth-Century America* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2007), 189–224; Robert B. Baker et al., “Creating a Segregated Medical Profession: African American Physicians and Organized Medicine, 1846-1910,” *Journal of the National Medical Association* 101, no. 6 (2009): 501–512; Ann Steinecke and Charles Terrell, “Progress for Whose Future? The Impact of the Flexner Report on Medical Education for Racial and Ethnic Minority Physicians in the United States,” *Academic Medicine* 85, no. 2 (2010): 236–245.

begin to practice as attorneys and teachers and to enter large business firms, they threatened existing elite practitioners. Had exploitation by proprietary schools been the primary concern of their critics, the most effective means of combating them would have been to offer free alternatives to students in the public sector, as evidenced by the successful eclipse of the proprietary commercial school by the public high school detailed in the previous chapter. At the collegiate level, however, not only did private universities oppose for-profit schools, they also fiercely opposed repeated efforts to open a public, degree-granting college in Boston. Because of the real advantages that schools provided – technical skills, cultural norms, and social networks – they came into conflict with educational and professional competitors. While unable to shut these schools down entirely, in efforts to regulate, accredit, and standardize, elite universities fueled a credentialed race to the top. In the professional world, these institutions in the Northeast were trendsetters that helped shape emerging national professional networks and standards.

In this chapter I will briefly outline the place of the professional and business elite in the occupational structure of Boston between 1880 and 1940, before turning to each case study: law, education, and business. Law offers the opportunity to explore a traditional “learned” profession, and the most exclusive profession in Boston. The profession of education illustrates the stark gender divide between teachers and educational administrators in the process of “professionalization.” Business management had an uneasy initial relationship with traditional colleges and universities but was refashioned a “profession” in this period. In each of these cases, I will highlight the political struggle between new proprietary schools that found allies in Boston’s increasingly powerful immigrant populations and with the Democratic Party, and traditional colleges and universities, allied with new professional associations and a circle of Boston’s elite, progressive-minded, political, economic, and educational leaders. The public school system was pulled in both directions, shaped by the contest between these vying political constituencies. As schooling came to replace

apprenticeship, inequality within each profession grew, mapping onto a tiered landscape of educational institutions. The college degree became the preferred credential for entry into these professions, and private universities became the primary site for access into the highest status occupations.

Overview

Between 1880 and 1940, according to the census classifications, Boston's male professionals grew from about 4% of the male workforce to 7%, while female professionals grew from 6% to 15%.¹⁵

While an imprecise tool, the census classifications are a useful proxy for Boston's professional elite.¹⁶

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show a selection of the largest professions for men and women, as a percentage of the male and female professional workforce.¹⁷

¹⁵ The quantitative data for this chapter is based on the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) U.S. Federal census samples: 10% sample for 1880, 5% for 1900, 100% for 1920, 100% for 1930, and 100% for 1940. I use the IPUMS 1950 census classification scheme "OCC1950."

¹⁶ Some of the largest categories of professions included in the census classification are not very high status: "musicians and music teachers" included many performers and entertainers that would not be considered professional elites. At the same time, other categories we might now include as professional work were excluded based on gender: "practical nurses," for instance, were excluded and classified as service workers. Overall as a proxy for professional elites, this category likely overestimates the total percentage. *IPUMS*, 1880-1940.

¹⁷ The rest of the occupations in the professional category are too numerous to list, but some of the other largest categories for men throughout this period include: actors, architects, artists and art teachers, chemists, university professors, dentists, draftsmen, editors and reporters, funeral directors and embalmers, musicians and music teachers, pharmacists, and photographers. For women, they include: actresses, artists and art teachers, editors and reporters, musicians and music teachers, librarians, religious workers, social and welfare workers, and testing-technicians. *IPUMS*, 1880-1940.

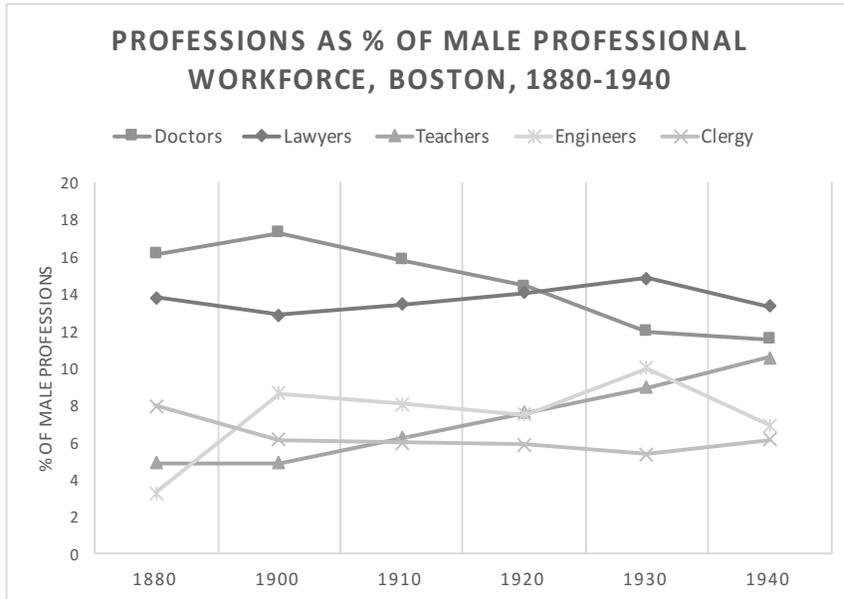


Figure 5.1

Sources: IPUMS 1880 100%, 1900 5%, 1910 1%, 1920 100%, 1930 100%, 1940 100%.

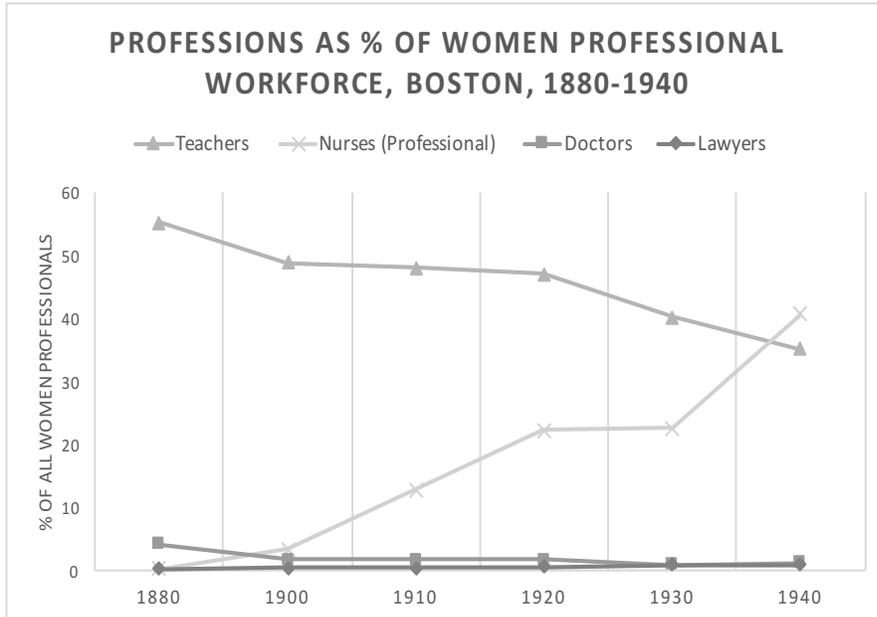


Figure 5.2

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940

Law was one of the most common professions for men, and one of the most exclusively male. Teaching was by far the most common female occupation, only replaced by nursing after 1930. The ethnic composition of professional practitioners also changed during these decades. Figures 5.3 to 5.6 depict “overrepresentation” of ethnic heritage in a given occupation.¹⁸

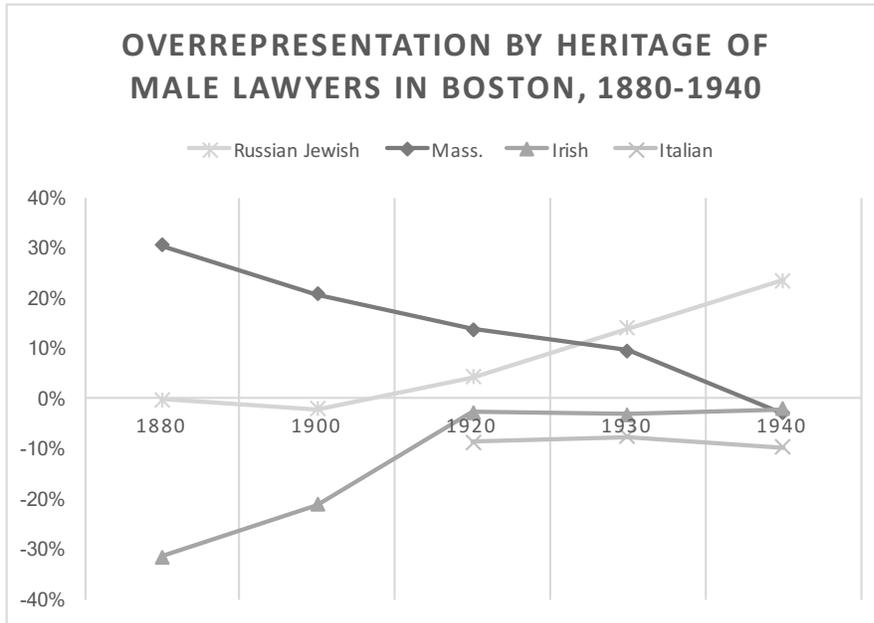


Figure 5.3

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

¹⁸ “Overrepresentation” of a specific heritage group is calculated by subtracting the overall percentage of the Boston (male or female) workforce that belongs to that group, from their percentage in the specific occupation. If women teachers of Massachusetts heritage made up 40% of all teachers, but only 10% of the total female work force, they would be overrepresented by 30%. *IPUMS*, 1880-1940

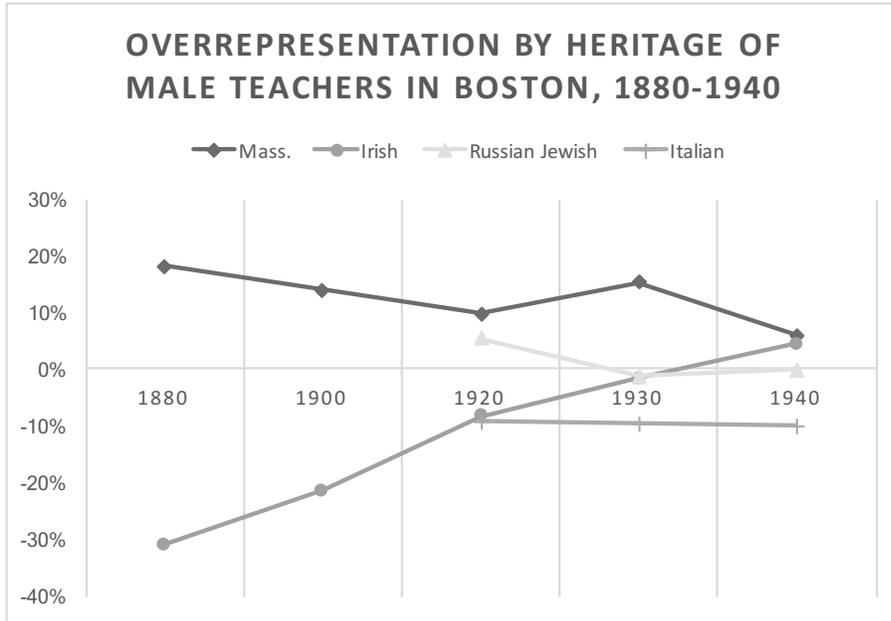


Figure 5.4

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

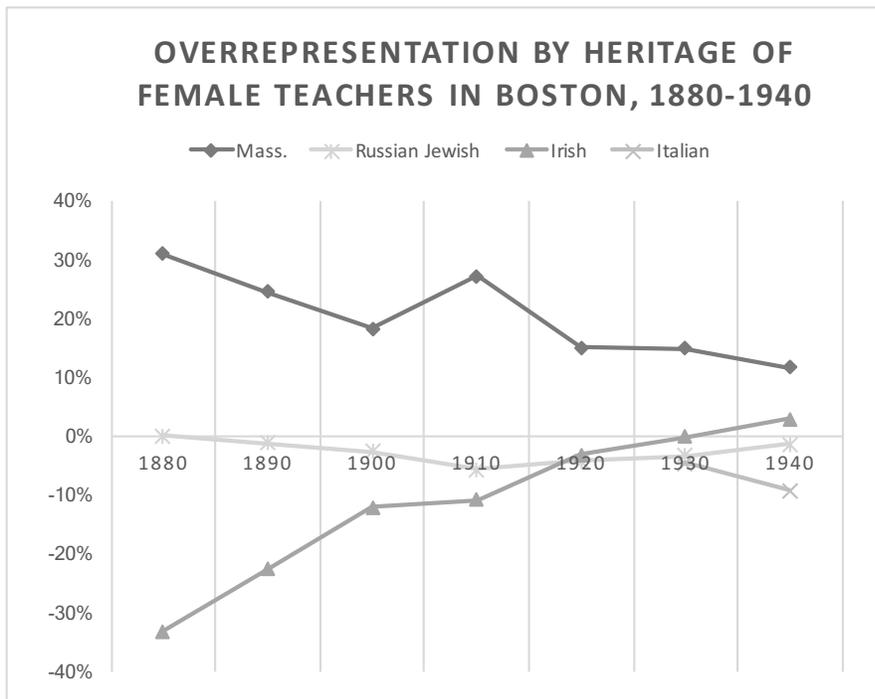


Figure 5.5

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

In all cases, women and men of Massachusetts heritage were heavily overrepresented in 1880, dropping over the next decades, although female teachers of Massachusetts heritage remained heavily overrepresented even in 1940. Irish men and women were extremely underrepresented and reached par or, in the case of teachers, were slightly overrepresented by 1940. Among male lawyers, Russian Jewish immigrants climbed the most steeply. Italians remained underrepresented among all these categories, and African American men and women, not depicted on these charts, were almost entirely excluded from these professions: they remained around 1% of all practicing lawyers in Boston, and less than 1% of male or female teachers as late as 1940.

The census category of “Managers and proprietors” shrunk from 12% to 8% of the male workforce, and stayed at approximately 3% of employed women in Boston throughout this period. This census category is less helpful than that of professionals for understanding Boston’s elite: it lumps the small immigrant retailer and the manager of a corporate firm.¹⁹ Of this wide category, certain demographic trends stand out: immigrant managers and proprietors, in particular Russian Jewish immigrants, rose significantly. While Irish representation rose, Irish and Italians remained underrepresented even by 1940. While Asian Americans remained less than 1% of the population through 1940, they were slightly overrepresented among small proprietors. African Americans grew to almost 4% of the Boston population by 1940, but remained less than 1% of all managers and proprietors.²⁰

¹⁹ The OCC1950 scheme, as mentioned, also excluded the most common type of female business occupation: boarding house keepers. I have added boarding housekeepers to the female pool of managers and proprietors, although even with this group added the total number of female proprietors remained small. *IPUMS*, 1880-1940.

²⁰ According to one study in 1914, of all employed African American men in Boston, there were 50 retail merchants, 3 wholesale merchants, 7 manufacturers and officials, and one banker. However, the author describes the majority of African-American establishments as all-purpose “grocery-fuel-dry-goods-hardware-china-stationery-tobacco-and-candy shops” that allowed their owners to “piece together a livelihood,” but hardly allowed them to compete with specialized businesses owned and managed by white proprietors. John Daniels, *In Freedom’s Birthplace; a Study of the Boston Negroes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 358–59.

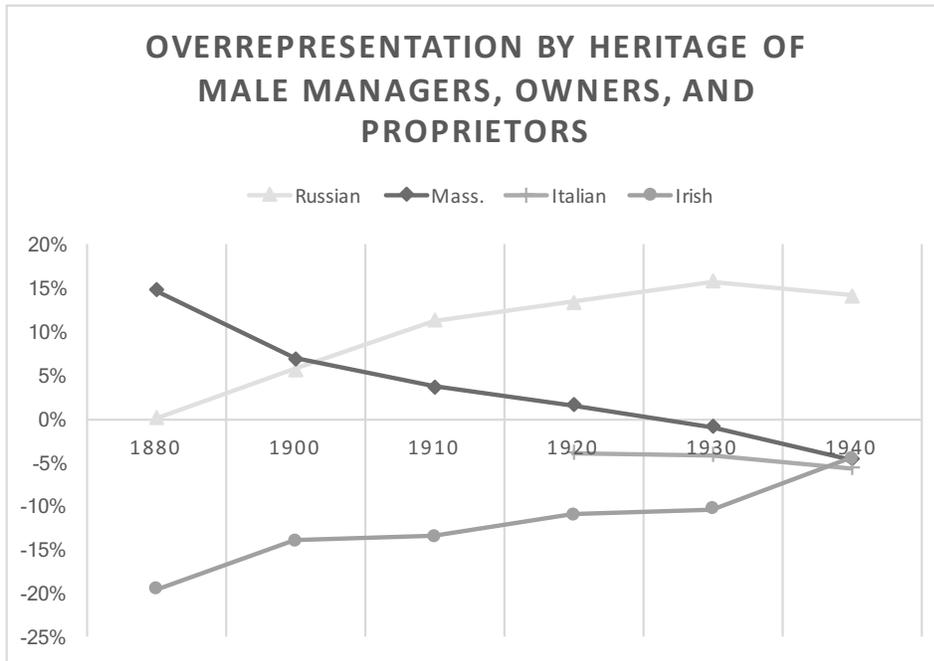


Figure 5.6

Sources: IPUMS 1880-1940.

The corporate world of financial and business elites was much smaller, and did not undergo the same demographic shifts. Likely no more than a few percentage points of the entire male workforce, corporate managers and executives were almost exclusively male, most were Episcopalian and Presbyterian, and they had longer roots in Massachusetts. In a study of the 200 CEOs of leading U.S. firms in 1917, less than 1% were Catholic, and less than half of 1% were Jewish. Over one third had parents who were also company executives, less than one percent had fathers who were manual workers.²¹ While Jewish businessmen did enter into the top ranks of the corporate world, they did not surpass 10% of business leaders in the Northeast before 1950, and

²¹ Richard S. Tedlow, *The American CEO in the Twentieth Century: Demography and Career Path*, Working Paper 03-097 (Boston: Division of Research, Harvard Business School, 2003), 54–55.

remained heavily segregated socially. Irish or Italian Catholics remained only a small percentage, and African American and Asian Americans were almost entirely excluded.²²

Part I: Practicing Law

Unlike many other occupations, the educational requirements governing entry to the profession of law in the United States decreased in the mid-nineteenth century before they increased. Before the populist wave of reforms in the 1830s, entry to practice law in courts was strictly controlled by leading attorneys and judges that comprised local bar associations. In 1808, in order to practice before the Suffolk County lower court, one needed three years of study in an attorney's law offices, in addition to having a college degree or having completed seven years of "literary pursuits" (equivalent of high school and college). Aspiring lawyers were expected to pay \$150 per year for their period of "office study," raised to \$500 in 1810.²³ The majority of these lawyers studied at Harvard College.²⁴ In 1836, Democrats in the Massachusetts legislature abolished the Suffolk Bar's control over admission to the legal profession and pushed through a new law that eliminated the formal education requirement altogether. Instead, one was required to either spend three years studying with a practicing lawyer in the form of an apprenticeship, or one could simply apply to and pass an exam administered by the courts without any formal preparation.

While this populist deregulation was a significant shift, it would be easy to overstate this difference in practice, especially in a Northeastern city like Boston. The bar "exam" was an oral exam administered by a judge, who was often member of the Suffolk Bar Association. To enter into

²² Anthony J. Mayo, *Paths to Power: How Insiders and Outsiders Shaped American Business Leadership* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2006), 84, 95; Susie Pak, *Gentlemen Bankers: The World of J. P. Morgan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 80–106.

²³ Douglas Lamar Jones, *Discovering the Public Interest: A History of the Boston Bar Association* (Canoga Park, CA.: Boston Bar Association and CCA Publications, 1993), 31–32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13, 24, 41.

an apprenticeship with a practicing attorney, one required social contacts that could facilitate an introduction and offer a recommendation. In addition, after acceptance into the bar, practicing lawyers participated in rituals of socialization while on the “circuit” that reinforced the exclusivity of those practicing law.²⁵

Lay people with no formal legal training, including many women, provided legal assistance to resolve small disputes regularly by the late nineteenth century.²⁶ Part of the process of “professionalization” was also taking control of practices and forms of knowledge previously not undertaken by lawyers.²⁷ Through this political process, the legal profession remained the most exclusively male profession in the United States through the late twentieth century.²⁸ While male immigrants were successful in opening the profession to a wider demographic group through their intensifying role in local and state politics, their entry also provoked elite practitioners, who worked to create a steep professional hierarchy. By the early twentieth century in urban centers like Boston, immigrant lawyers tended to work in municipal, police, and family courts serving working class and lower-middle class clients, while white, male, Protestant, college-educated lawyers became judges and attorneys for state Supreme Courts or, increasingly, worked in large corporate law firms.

Before the 1870s, law schools did not serve as the primary form of training, the regulation of entry, or certification of the knowledge of lawyers. Less than 40% of notable lawyers listed in *Who's Who in America* in 1899 were law school graduates.²⁹ Law schools were meant to supplement, not

²⁵ Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers*, 25–41.

²⁶ Felice Batlan, *Women and Justice for the Poor: A History of Legal Aid, 1863-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²⁷ “Dispute settlement,” for instance, was often taken up in lower courts by laymen with no legal training. Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers*, 171.

²⁸ Virginia G. Drachman, *Sisters in Law: Women Lawyers in Modern American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 2.

²⁹ John William Leonard and Albert Nelson Marquis, *Who's Who in America* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Co., 1899), xii.

substitute for, the primary form of training: apprenticeship.³⁰ When Harvard Law School was founded in 1817, it offered an eighteen-month course leading to a Bachelors of Law (LLB), without any required final examination, taught by law “professors” who were all also practicing lawyers, after which students would conduct a period of office study.³¹ After the Civil War, as in other economic sectors, the challenges of apprenticeship mounted. Mirroring the growth of large corporate and government bureaucracies, the field of law grew and specialized into a range of subfields. Apprenticeships in which a young lawyer could systematically learn the basics of law grew more impractical in large, specialized offices.

New educational entrepreneurs saw an opportunity to found law schools to cater to a growing pool of aspiring lawyers having difficulty securing an apprenticeship. Beginning in the late 1880s in urban centers across the country, new part-time law schools emerged. By 1890 their enrollment across the United States had already surpassed enrollment in full-time day schools.³² Many new law “schools” were simply entrepreneurial practitioners who, instead of taking on a few apprentices, offered part-time study in the evenings. At a time when possession of a law degree was not essential to passing the bar exam, most did not offer degrees. Schools also provided access to networks of practicing lawyers. The chiefly immigrant graduates of these law schools tended to practice in the lower municipal and police courts, often with clients of their own ethnic background. These changes took place within a new political context, as political mobilization of middle and working-class immigrants in urban centers after the Civil War destabilized the political power of elites. While Massachusetts state-level politics remained controlled by Republicans through the turn

³⁰ Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers*, 42–54.

³¹ Many students enrolled and did not complete the degree requirements. Jones, *Discovering the Public Interest*, 42–43.

³² Robert Bocking Stevens, *Law School: Legal Education in America from the 1850s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 74–75.

of the century, in Boston the Democratic Party grew rapidly with the rising political power of the Irish Catholic community.

The growing number of students who sought office study with attorneys and aspired to become lawyers threatened the control of the profession by the nineteenth-century legal elite. These attorneys lamented the “overcrowding” of the profession, especially by the sons of immigrants, whom they blamed for the erosion of previous forms of socialization, and for degrading the standards of conduct of lawyers through corruption and malpractice. Legal elites called for the creation of local bar associations that would, like those associations of physicians, increase the status and influence of practicing lawyers. In Boston in 1876, a group of thirty-seven leading attorneys formed the Boston Bar Association (BBA). Among these thirty-seven, thirty-two had attended college, and twenty-five of them had studied at Harvard. The leadership of the BBA included powerful, well-connected politicians.³³ Through political leverage at the state level, the BBA successfully lobbied for a new law that required applicants to the bar, regardless of the length of their previous formal study, to pass an exam. This exam was to be administered by a newly appointed Board of Bar Examiners, principally filled by members of the BBA. By the turn of the century, the BBA only included half of all Boston’s practicing lawyers, and while 20% of all lawyers in Boston were Irish, only 3% of BBA members were. While a few African American attorneys had been part of the bar since the 1840s, the BBA would only admit its first African-American attorney in 1915. The leadership of the BBA remained almost exclusively drawn from Harvard-educated lawyers.³⁴

³³ William Gaston, former Democratic governor of Massachusetts and Mayor of Boston; John D. Long, future Massachusetts Governor and current Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives; and Walbridge Field, future Attorney General of the United States and Massachusetts Supreme Court Justice. Jones, *Discovering the Public Interest*, 55.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43–85.

University Law Schools

Among degree-granting universities, a reorientation to new practical subjects, especially through the application of scientific knowledge, was already underway by 1870. Liberal arts colleges facing declining enrollment across the U.S. believed the sponsorship of practical subjects would boost interest, as well as forge institutional ties to professional and economic elites. Alumni provoked many of these changes. In 1869, the control of Harvard's governing board of overseers shifted towards its alumni, many of whom were leading businessmen and professionals.³⁵ The same year, this board brought in Charles W. Eliot, an assistant professor of chemistry from MIT, to modernize the university. While earning the disdain of some classical educators who believed "vocational" training should be no part of a liberal education, Eliot believed any subject worthy of study at its highest levels, and his reforms and expansion of professional education at Harvard reflected this philosophy "We would have them all, and at their best."³⁶ Eliot too was concerned with the declining public influence of the Brahmin class, and believed this class could rebuild its authority through scientific, expert knowledge. He believed in a natural aristocracy recruited from the most talented of all social classes, and higher education as a means of nurturing the best characteristics that would be inherited by future generations.³⁷ This philosophy led him to diversify the curriculum and introduce the elective system in the college, as well as upgrade professional schools attached to the university.

³⁵ The Board of Overseers reported in 1869: "The emancipation of Harvard from its confused relationship to the State, and its new basis, resting on the love and help of its Alumni, opens to it a prospect of great progress and usefulness." Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard, 1636-1936* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 326.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 330.

³⁷ Eliot was influenced by Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* (1869) that placed intelligence on a hereditary basis. Eliot was concerned by studies that showed lower birth rates among male college graduates: "the highly educated part of the American people" was "[failing] to reproduce itself." "President Eliot's Alarm Note: Birth Figures Too Small," *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb 10, 1903, 2. Joseph F. Kett, *Merit: The History of a Founding Ideal from the American Revolution to the Twenty-First Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 117–18.

In 1870, Eliot appointed Christopher Columbus Langdell, a former Harvard college and Harvard law school student, as Dean of Harvard Law School. Langdell initiated a series of reforms aimed to improve instruction and elevate the status of university legal education by placing it on a scientific basis. Langdell introduced the case method of law instruction, which quickly became the dominant form of legal pedagogy used in law schools across the country.³⁸ Law professors were hired full-time, without side law practices, which differentiated law practitioners from legal professors and scholars.³⁹ By 1877, Harvard changed its Bachelor of Laws (LLB) program from two to three years, and in 1893 required a college degree to enter as an LLB candidate. Despite these increased requirements, or perhaps because of them, enrollments grew rapidly.⁴⁰

A closer look at the implementation of Langdell's case method reveals the increasing divergence in legal skills within an emergent legal hierarchy. While previous law instruction in schools was based on legal doctrine and rules, the case method was based on deriving these rules from actual appellate cases. As Langdell described, "law is a science," that "consists of certain principles or doctrines...the shortest and the best, if not the only way of mastering the doctrine effectually is by studying the cases in which it is embodied."⁴¹ The case method exchanged learning the content of law for a method of learning the law which could be applied to further research and investigation.⁴² While the case method was justified philosophically as the best form of training for a legal mind, it also met very practical demands. It allowed for a higher faculty: student ratio to accommodate rapidly growing enrollments. Cold-called quizzing (aka the "Socratic method") in

³⁸ Stevens, *Law School*, 59.

³⁹ James Barr Ames, appointed as assistant professor of Law in 1873, had no previous experience in legal practice, a fact in which President Eliot took pride, calling it "an absolutely new departure in our country in the teaching of law." Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers*, 105.

⁴⁰ Daniel R. Coquillette, *On the Battlefield of Merit: Harvard Law School, the First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 473–75.

⁴¹ Stevens, *Law School*, 52.

⁴² Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers*, 103–4; Stevens, *Law School*, 56.

large lecture halls instead of recitation was more exciting for students. Most importantly, it mapped onto a divergence in the nature of legal work.⁴³ The traditional practice of lawyers, and still the work of about half of all Boston lawyers at the turn of the century, was as trial lawyers who appeared and argued their case in municipal and police courts. Preparation for practical legal work in this realm was based on knowledge of local and state law and oratory skills; this was the preparation that most evening and part-time law schools provided.⁴⁴

A different sort of practice characterized the most elite forms of legal practice. Judges and state attorneys, who wrote briefs and opinions, required greater knowledge of the theory and principles behind legal decisions. The biggest and most profitable sector of law was the emerging field of corporate law. While most nineteenth-century legal disputes had small sums of money at stake, new corporations sought to avoid potentially high-risk lawsuits. Corporations hired lawyers, often on a retainer or long-term basis, to draw up contracts and arrange the firm's affairs in advance to prevent future challenges. Rather than the court advocate, the lawyer became the "office counselor," for whom theoretical legal knowledge and writing technical legal language proved to be the most practical legal skills.⁴⁵ In Boston, Louis Brandeis was the pioneer of the modern law firm in the 1880s, and hired almost exclusively Harvard law school graduates, trained in the case method with the highest rankings in their class, to work as salaried assistants and then partners.⁴⁶ Critics of the case method claimed it was "in the bad sense, a schoolman's concept" that would not train court advocates in the "alertness and nimble-mindedness of active practitioner."⁴⁷ These criticisms were

⁴³ Stevens, *Law School*, 63.

⁴⁴ Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers*, 63.

⁴⁵Ibid., 58–63.

⁴⁶ Wayne Hobson, "Symbol of the New Profession: Emergence of the Large Law Firm, 1870-1915," in *The New High Priests: Lawyers in Post-Civil War America*, ed. Gerard W. Gawalt (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984).

⁴⁷ Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers*, 103–5, 116. Indeed, in most evening law schools, law professors were also practitioners, not full-time professors.

correct. They reflected the divergence between the courtroom lawyer and the office counselor who practiced law in very different ways.

The link forged between Harvard Law School and the corporate world was not merely the result of the pedagogical training of its students, however. HLS actively cultivated its ties to leading law firms in Boston through its far-reaching alumni network, including Louis Brandeis.⁴⁸ While HLS did not establish a formal placement office until the 1940s, professors received information about openings in top law firms and recommended students. The office of the secretary also provided current students with alumni contacts in cities like New York and Chicago, where there were active Law School Alumni Associations that functioned as employment bureaus.⁴⁹ HLS, which required a college degree to enter, also drew a large proportion of Harvard college undergrads. Among Harvard undergraduates through the 1920s, law was second only to business as the most preferred career path.⁵⁰ These school-based channels helped reproduce an elite stratum of the legal profession that was overwhelmingly male, white, Protestant, and from upper-class backgrounds. Harvard's reputation depended on cultivating the favored demographics among its student body, evidenced by its implementation of a series of discriminatory admissions policies towards Jewish students, Catholic school graduates, and women.⁵¹

The tightening link between educated, professional lawyers and the corporate world was not without its critics, especially those who worried about the integrity of law as a profession. As Louis Brandeis' partner George Nutter described: "One purchases legal brains now in the same way as he

⁴⁸ Hobson, "Symbol of the New Profession: Emergence of the Large Law Firm, 1870-1915," 19–20.

⁴⁹ Benjamin D. Raub, "Placement Work in Law Schools," *Duke Bar Association Journal* 5 (1940): 18.

⁵⁰ "Vocational Preferences in the Class of 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926," Box 94, Folder: Vocational Studies, Harvard, 1924-1929, Records of the Office of Career Services 1913-1985, Harvard University Archives, Harvard University (hereafter OCS).

⁵¹ President Lowell proposed an outright quota of Jewish students in 1922, and introduced new policies aimed to restrict Jewish students after 1926. Lowell was worried in particular about the problem that a growing number of Jewish students had on alumni recruitment efforts, which disrupted the strength of alumni ties. Boston's Catholic schools were left off a list of qualified colleges, from which graduates would be accepted to HLS. Women students were not admitted until 1950. Coquillette, *On the Battlefield of Merit*, 476–508, 608; Pak, *Gentlemen Bankers*, 146.

purchases industrial labor or anything else.”⁵² However, institutionally and politically, it was these ties that allowed Harvard to develop and remain at the top of the educational hierarchy. The model of Harvard Law School—including the case method, a three-year program, full-time professors, and a selected student body—spread nationwide, in part because of its effectiveness, but also because of its prestige. Even Boston University Law School, founded in 1872 by lawyers who rejected Harvard’s newly adopted case method model, introduced a new emphasis on cases by 1899.⁵³

Regulating the Training Landscape in Boston

As preparation for passing the bar exam shifted to school-based training, Harvard Law School played a central role in attempts to standardize training for the legal profession, both locally and nationally. In 1893, soon after HLS had limited entry to those with college degrees, it adopted a new policy that as of 1895-96, only those graduates of select, “respectable” colleges from a list printed in its annual catalog were to be admitted without examination. The list, drawn up by Langdell with input from other Harvard officials, did not include a single Catholic college, despite the fact that a steady stream of Catholic college graduates had been attending HLS for years.⁵⁴ In response to an outcry from Boston’s Catholic press, President Eliot denied any anti-Catholic prejudice, instead citing the low standard of Catholic colleges. Eliot accused a Jesuit education, lacking in “modern” subjects like science and foreign language, of being “retrograde.” Catholic college leaders such as Boston College president Father W. G. R. Mullan fiercely refuted this accusation, arguing that their

⁵² Hobson, “Symbol of the New Profession: Emergence of the Large Law Firm, 1870-1915,” 21.

⁵³ Steve Sheppard, “An Introductory History of Law in the Lecture Hall, 1997,” in *The History of Legal Education in the United States: Commentaries and Primary Sources*, ed. Steve Sheppard (Pasadena, Calif.: Salem Press, 1999), 31, 62. In practice, the implementation of the case method looked very different across schools, and many schools merely used it as a means of advertising. For instance, in 1913 the YMCA Evening Institute advertised itself as: “An Evening Law School with Day School Standards—Case Method of Instruction, Competent Instruction, Compulsory Attendance and Rigorous Examinations,” while in practice it merged this method with lectures. Stevens, *Law School*, 192.

⁵⁴ Coquillotte, *On the Battlefield of Merit*, 499.

classical curriculum was the best preparation for legal study.⁵⁵ But Harvard's policy was about more than curricular preferences: after temporarily adding three Catholic colleges, including BC, to the accepted list, the new Dean James Barr Ames decided to remove Boston College and Holy Cross in 1897. These were the only two institutions ever reexamined for academic merit and removed after being placed on the list.⁵⁶ In 1904, after continued bad publicity, the law school simply ceased publishing its list, and applicants were directed to send inquiries to the secretary about the status of their school. Boston College's enrollment declined between 1898 and 1904, which historians of the school have attributed to Harvard's admissions policies.⁵⁷

Harvard Law School also played a primary role in efforts to regulate part-time and evening law schools. Some elite law schools had cooperative relationships with specific schools: for example, the Evening Law Institute of the Boston YMCA was founded by Harvard Law School graduates in 1898 and regularly brought in Harvard law professors to lecture.⁵⁸ The YMCA was also a central institution in the Protestant philanthropic community of the Boston elite, and embodied the moral mission of service to the worthy poor.⁵⁹ The YMCA law school catered to students who were otherwise excluded from the legal profession, such as Forrest Anderson, the African-American waiter who became president of the Waiter's Union Local 183, who completed his evening law training in 1913 and went on to become one of the only black lawyers in Kansas through the 1930s.⁶⁰ With Harvard's backing, the YMCA Evening Law Institute was awarded degree-granting

⁵⁵ David J. Loftus, *Boston College High School, 1863-1983* (Boston: Addison CGetchell, 1984), 23–25; Coquilllette, *On the Battlefield of Merit*, 504.; “Recent Deaths,” *The Sacred Heart Review* 43:7, Feb. 5, 1907, 2.

⁵⁶ Coquilllette, *On the Battlefield of Merit*, 500–507.

⁵⁷ Loftus, *Boston College High School, 1863-1983*, 25.

⁵⁸ Contemporaries suspected the school was founded in part to draw students away from Harvard's competitor, Boston University Law School. Archer, *The Educational Octopus*, 103.

⁵⁹ Historian Robert Stevens argues: “The attitude toward each proprietary school amounted to a partially hidden but pervasive distinction between the worthy poor and unworthy poor.” Stevens, *Law School*, 79.

⁶⁰ J. Clay Smith Jr, *Emancipation: The Making of the Black Lawyer, 1844-1944* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 76; L. J. Pettijohn, *Twenty-Second Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Kansas, 1919-1920* (Topeka:

power by the state legislature in 1904, and subsequent legislation demonstrated a clear preference for the YMCA school over alternative, proprietary, evening law schools.⁶¹

Suffolk Law School was one such evening school that encountered fierce opposition from Boston's legal elite. Suffolk was founded by Gleason Archer, the son of a Maine logger who, with the sponsorship of a Boston corset manufacturer, became a student at Boston University Law School.⁶² As a second year law student in 1905, Archer was approached by a colleague who wanted to pass the bar exam. By the next fall, Archer had recruited seven students (including a second cousin) to begin a small "school" of law in his home in Roxbury, where he hung a glass sign reading "Archer's Evening Law School" over the door. He held classes in his living room, once a week for two hours.⁶³ Over the next years, Archer financed the school through student fees as well as the publication of several law textbooks.⁶⁴ While Archer repeatedly touted the humble origins of his school and students, most Suffolk Law School students were small proprietors, salesmen, lower-level managers, or local or state politicians, using their legal training to upgrade their jobs rather than to escape from poverty.⁶⁵ In a 1928 survey of Suffolk alumni, most had opened solo or joint legal partnerships with other Suffolk graduates, in general or specialized practice in insurance, probate, tax, real estate, patent law, and domestic and family law. Many had found work in local politics or

Kansas State Printing Plant, 1920), 75; "Legal Directory," *The Crisis* 46, no. 12 (December 1939): 379; J.J. Boris, ed., *Who's Who in Colored America* (New York: Who's Who in Colored America Corp, 1927), 5. See also manuscript census entries in 1910 and 1940: Year: 1910; Census Place: Boston Ward 10, Suffolk, Massachusetts; Roll: T624_617; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 1405; FHL microfilm: 1374630; Year: 1910; Census Place: Boston Ward 10, Suffolk, Massachusetts; Roll: T624_617; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 1405; FHL microfilm: 1374630

⁶¹ Archer, *The Educational Octopus*, 113–43.

⁶² Thomas Koenig and Michael Rustad, "The Challenge to Hierarchy in Legal Education: Suffolk and the Night Law School Movement," *Research in Law, Deviance & Social Control* 7 (1985): 197.

⁶³ Archer, *The Educational Octopus*, 21–34.

⁶⁴ Archer's textbooks proved to be publisher Little & Brown's bestselling books of the year, and were used widely across Boston. Even students of Yale and Harvard used them to study for the bar exam, as Archer liked to boast. *Ibid.*, 116.

⁶⁵ Koenig and Rustad, "The Challenge to Hierarchy in Legal Education," 203; Archer, *The Educational Octopus*, 169, 240. In the course of Archer's legislative fight for degree-granting authority, several legislators heard about the school and came to study with him, including Joe Parks of Fall River, Edward N. Dahlborg of Brockton, John J. Murphy of South Boston, and James F. Griffin of Ward 22. Griffin became one of Archer's primary advocates in organizing Democratic legislators to support the school in 1912.

government agencies, some taught law themselves (many at Suffolk), others found non-legal work in the insurance and banking industries. Not one of Suffolk's graduates was employed in the corporate firms of Boston's legal elite.⁶⁶

By 1911, Suffolk Law School had grown in size, but Archer recounted the strong stigma attached to the "evening law" student, and he sought to raise the profile of his school. He established a day department of his school, not because of demand, but because the fact of advertising Suffolk Law as a day school would raise its status. More importantly, a day department would increase his chances to win degree-granting power from the state legislature, a bid that had strong support among his students. Degree-granting power was derived from a college or university's state charter, and thus required an act of legislation. This was thus a political space for competitor institutions to try to limit or block degree-granting authority.⁶⁷ While law degrees were relatively unimportant in the late nineteenth century, by 1911 the ability to grant a law degree was marker of standing, and Archer considered degree-granting power was "imperative if the school was to be a success."⁶⁸

Suffolk Law School's petition for degree-granting authority encountered fierce resistance from the legal and educational establishment of Massachusetts, with Harvard leading the opposition. Harvard, as Archer put it: "[viewed] with alarm the prospect of Suffolk graduates...coming into competition with the spineless aristocrats who form so large a proportion of Harvard Law School graduates." Archer dubbed Harvard the "Educational Octopus" that "controls the school system,

⁶⁶ Koenig and Rustad, "The Challenge to Hierarchy in Legal Education," 203–5.

⁶⁷ In the earliest institutions, charters often granted general degree-granting power, meaning that the institution could decide to offer whatever type of degree it wanted. While the most common degrees were those derived from their European antecedents (BA, JD, MD), this legal leeway allowed universities and colleges across the country to launch new degree programs, leading to a wide variation in degree types by the turn of the century. Subsequent school charters were often much more specific about which degree the institution was allowed to grant, typically because established institutions sought to protect certain coveted degrees (for instance, YMCA's charter allowed them to grant a bachelors of commercial science, but not a bachelors of arts). By the end of this period, as elite institutions set the gold standard that other institutions sought to emulate, the range of degrees declined and conformed to a standard model.

⁶⁸ Archer, *The Educational Octopus*, 152–59.

the State Boards of Education for admission to the great professions, [and] the educational activities of [YMCA] associations ostensibly formed for the benefit of the poor.” While Archer was prone to exaggeration, his bill did face opposition from every major law school in Boston, the local and state bar associations, and public school administration including the State Board of Education. The Dean of Boston University Law School had sent a letter to each member of legislature urging defeat of Suffolk’s bill.⁶⁹ In the bill’s first hearing, President Lowell of Harvard argued against conferring degree-granting authority before a State Board of Education investigation. Frank Speare, President of the YMCA Evening Institute, also spoke in opposition, although his position was undercut when he admitted that he had never studied law. President Lowell was also backed into a corner when he admitted that if Suffolk could prove to be equal to the YMCA Institute, they should also be given degree-granting authority.⁷⁰

Archer garnered political support for his school among Democratic legislators. While the “Educational Octopus” was formidable, Suffolk’s lawyers also had ties to local and state Democratic politicians. Archer managed to pull together a politically powerful board of trustees for his school, including Charles Bartlett, a lawyer and Democratic candidate for Governor; Joseph F. O’Connell, a former congressman; and James H. Vahey, the current Democratic candidate for Governor, who had several relatives who had attended Suffolk. With these endorsements, Gleason “lined up the whole Democratic vote of the House and Senate.”⁷¹ During the hearings, notorious Democratic ward-boss Martin Lomasney also emerged to defend bill, exclaiming: “Don’t let the lawyers of this body make a trust of legal education in MA.”⁷² Despite having “the support of every Democratic Senator and 80% of the Democrats in the House,” the Suffolk Law School bill was vetoed by

⁶⁹ Ibid., 103–7, 187–88.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 173–88.

⁷¹Ibid., 160–63.

⁷² Ibid., 196. The arguments that played out on the floor of congress in 1911 recalled the same political fault lines of 1836.

Democratic Governor Foss, first in 1912, and a second time in 1913. Foss' vetoes against his own party indicated the immense power of the legal and educational establishment within Boston. Foss himself was a trustee of the YMCA law school. Before the first veto, Foss had privately consulted with the State Commissioner of Education David Snedden, who presented a hastily prepared negative report about the Suffolk Law School.⁷³ After Archer and his allies regrouped and re-passed a new petition, Foss vetoed it again. This time, however, Archer had not only gained widespread media attention, but also the support of powerful Democratic constituencies, including labor unions, who were furious that Foss would twice vote against a majority of his own party.⁷⁴

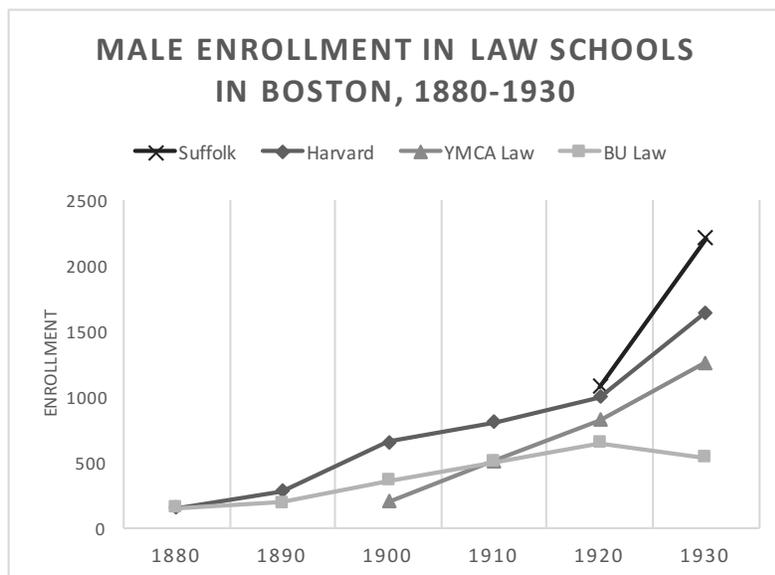


Figure 5.7

Sources: *Report of the Commissioner of Education* (Washington D.C.: GPO) 1880-1910; *Biennial Survey of Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1920-30.

In no small part due to the controversy over Suffolk Law School, Foss lost his re-election campaign to David Walsh, the first Irish governor of Massachusetts. Archer's bill was signed into law in March

⁷³ Ibid., 206–11, 246.

⁷⁴ Walter L. McMennimen, State House legislative Agent of the Locomotive Engineers, “ relayed similar experience that his organization had had with the governor on the 'full crew' bill of the previous year.” Ibid., 253.

of 1914.⁷⁵ In the next decade, Suffolk's enrollment boomed, surpassing Harvard Law School, as Figure 5.7 shows. Suffolk's success points to the limits of elite practitioners to control these schools directly through legislative means.

Women in the Legal Profession

While the legal profession remained the most exclusively male profession through the mid-twentieth century, this extreme gender differential was also the outcome of an active campaign by the elite male legal establishment against women's legal practices. The history of legal aid exemplifies the way women were pushed out in the process of "professionalization." By the 1870s, middle-class women had organized protective agencies for working class and immigrant women in the major cities of New York, Chicago and Boston, which offered legal assistance to women. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Protective Committee of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU) was founded in 1878, and a summary of two month's work in 1889 illustrates the range of work performed:

"39 cases heard, 21 calls made on account of these cases. Of these 18 were for domestic service, 6 for seamstress or dressmaking work, 2 for nursing, 1 for laundry work, 1 for instruction in water colors, 1 in photography, 1 for canning fruit, 1 for board of child, 1 for board of man, and 1 for collection of a plumber's bill. The largest claim was \$57.00, the smallest was \$1.00. Claims were paid in 11 cases, though not all paid in full. Two cases were brought to court...Asked assistance of attorneys in 11 cases."⁷⁶

The WEIU was the first of similar societies to take on cases of domestic servants, and wage theft by domestic employers quickly grew to a majority of the hundreds of cases they took every year. The WEIU was staffed by college-educated women volunteers, some of whom were the wives of Boston

⁷⁵Ibid., 273.

⁷⁶ Kate Gannet Wells, "Report of the Protective Committee," *Report of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, 1889* (Boston, 1889), 37.

attorneys, others who had attended law school themselves, but most of whom had acquired legal knowledge through the practice of providing aid. While the WEIU initially consulted male attorneys on all cases, within four years in 1882, as its female staff gained legal knowledge and experience, they were settling half of all their cases themselves. That year they could claim: “Mrs. Sewall and Mrs. Willey are the prosecuting agents of the department. They hear and investigate all complaints, and have already attained such legal skill that the Boston bar could properly call them *sisters-in-law*.”⁷⁷

Despite of the dominance of women in the field of legal assistance to the poor, or rather, because of it, practicing male attorneys of the Boston Bar turned their eye to “professionalizing” legal aid. Leading male attorneys associated with the BBA founded the Boston Legal Aid Society in 1900. Their vision, while aiming to address the stark class disparities in the provision of legal services, had no room for women who had not passed the bar exam. Reginald Heber Smith’s *Justice and the Poor*, published in 1919, exemplified this new reformist vision. Smith, a 1914 Harvard Law School graduate who began his career on the staff of the Boston Legal Aid Society, condemned the legal establishment for their neglect of the poor.⁷⁸ Instead of receiving quality legal aid, according to Smith, poor and working class men were being exploited by second-rate lawyers at the bottom of the legal hierarchy and ignored by respectable, qualified, expertly trained lawyers at the top. While this book was a strong rebuke of the existing legal profession, it was not a challenge to the legal elite so much as a call to redirect their attention. Second-rate lawyers and the phenomenon of “ambulance chasers” were common epithets for immigrant Jewish and Irish lawyers trained in evening law schools.⁷⁹ Those who were not university-educated attorneys were deemed incompetent to handle legal matters, a direct attack not only on immigrant lawyers but also on women’s legal

⁷⁷ Batlan, *Women and Justice for the Poor*, 43.

⁷⁸ Jones, *Discovering the Public Interest*, 74.

⁷⁹ Jerold S. Auerbach, *Unequal Justice: Lawyers and Social Change in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 48–49.

work. In his book, Smith depicted all women's legal work in protective societies and the emerging field of social work as unscientific and sentimental "charity." He also argued that the surplus of women clients served by these societies skewed the legal field away from its proper focus on helping poor men become independent breadwinners. In the 1920s, the National Association of Legal Aid Organizations (NALAO) would receive support from the American Bar Association to help increase the "correct" type of legal aid organizations by local bar associations across the country, helping to restrict not only women's legal practice but also the access that working class women had to legal services.⁸⁰

While in many states, women would have to wait until the nineteenth amendment in 1920 to be admitted to the bar, in Massachusetts a few women did break this barrier in the late nineteenth century. Since its founding in 1872, Boston University Law School was open to women, and several attended every year. One of these women was Leila Robinson, who upon graduation in 1882 petitioned for admission to the bar. Instead of routine approval, the Bar Examiners referred her application to the Chief Justice, who rejected her petition. However, in response, the MA state legislature passed a bill specifically granting women the right to practice law, signed into law by a long-time supporter of women's rights, Governor John D. Long. Robinson thus became the first woman admitted to the bar in Massachusetts.⁸¹ While women continued to be excluded from elite law schools and professional associations (the BBA admitted its first woman in 1916, the ABA in 1918), part-time law schools opened some doors.⁸² In 1908, the partner of Gleason Archer, Arthur W. Mclean, founded Portia Law School in 1908 as the first law school in the country organized exclusively for women. McLean was not motivated by a political commitment to women's

⁸⁰ Batlan, *Women and Justice for the Poor*, 135–53.

⁸¹ Drachman, *Sisters in Law*, 27–30; Jones, *Discovering the Public Interest*, 58–59.

⁸² Jones, *Discovering the Public Interest*, 85.

education, but, like his partner, saw an untapped market.⁸³ After 1919 when Portia successfully won charter to grant LLB degree, enrollment grew through 1920s to hundreds per year.⁸⁴ The YMCA Evening Institute, upon becoming Northeastern University in 1922, also began to admit women to its law school in 1923.⁸⁵

Women's law schools and women lawyers, however, faced harsher standards than their male counterparts. In 1929, McLean petitioned the MA Board of Higher Education to admit men to his school in order to become a co-ed institution. That year, Portia graduates passed the bar at a rate of 65%, compared to the average men's evening law school pass rate of 40%. McLean's petition was refused, however, because his standards were "not high enough."⁸⁶ Practicing female lawyers in Boston, and in the U.S. at large, remained few. While Irish and Jewish male lawyers were more successful, in 1920, there were only 103 female lawyers out of 2,560 lawyers total practicing in Boston, and their numbers were small into the late twentieth century.⁸⁷ Women lawyers did carve out spaces within the legal profession, in particular those areas of law gendered female: marriage and divorce cases, custody cases, domestic dispute settlement, and juvenile cases. However, this practice of professional "demarcation" was also the result of their exclusion by the male legal elite.⁸⁸

⁸³ Ronald Chester, *Unequal Access: Women Lawyers in a Changing America* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1985), 21–22.

⁸⁴ In 1926, Portia enrolled 436 female students. Jones, *Discovering the Public Interest*, 77.

⁸⁵ Stevens, *Law School*, 194.

⁸⁶ Chester, *Unequal Access*, 11. Portia introduced a Masters of Law program in 1926 to which male students were admitted, and the first male students graduated in 1930. In 1969 Portia won accreditation as a law school from the ABA and changed its name to New England School of Law. Portia Law School Archives 1908-1968, New England Law Library, Boston, Mass.

⁸⁷ Jones, *Discovering the Public Interest*, 77. IPUMS data.

⁸⁸ Anne Witz has described the gendered strategy of professional "demarcation": rather than attempting to "usurp" the male field of business management, women instead demarcate "a related but distinct sphere of competence in an occupational division of labor." "Anne Witz, "Patriarchy and Professions: The Gendered Politics of Occupational Closure," *Sociology* 24, no. 4 (1990): 682.

National Regulation of Legal Training

As we have seen, the “Educational Octopus” in Massachusetts could not prevent new schools like Suffolk and Portia from granting degrees or the State Board of Bar Examiners from admitting a wide range of applicants to the bar. However, allied with national legal professional associations, the legal elite of Massachusetts led efforts to regulate national standards of the profession through forms of accreditation. Setting national standards faced many challenges. Unlike the American Medical Association, the American Bar Association (founded 1878) only counted 3% of lawyers as members by 1910, compared to 50% of doctors. The American Association of Law Schools (AALS), founded in 1900 by leading law schools like Harvard was an even more exclusive national association of deans and law professors.⁸⁹ The AALS, which helped found the ABA Committee on Legal Education and Admission to the Bar, was inspired by the success of the Carnegie Foundation-sponsored Flexner Report on medical education, which helped the campaign of the medical profession against proliferating medical schools. This committee solicited the Carnegie Foundation to produce an equivalent report for the legal profession. Henry Pritchett, the former President of MIT and President of the Carnegie Foundation since 1906, commissioned Columbia PhD Alfred Reed to write a report, published in 1921 as *Training for the Public Profession of the Law*.⁹⁰ AALS legal professionals were severely disappointed. Reed noted the problem of unregulated and exploitative law schools, but argued “participation in the making and administration of the law shall be kept accessible to Lincoln’s plain people.”⁹¹ Shutting down evening and part-time law schools would deprive the “plain people” of access to the practice of law as well as access to most legal services.

⁸⁹Stevens, *Law School*, 112.

⁹⁰ Pritchett commissioned two reports: one by Austrian scholar Joseph Redlich, *The Common Law and the Case Method in American University Law Schools*, published in 1914, which received minimal public attention. The Reed report was much more widely circulated, and generated the most public debate. Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, *Private Power for the Public Good: A History of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 75.

⁹¹ Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers*, 157.

Against the concept of a “unitary bar,” or a universal set of standards for legal practices, he argued for the value of different types of schools, catering to distinct populations, for distinct legal services.⁹²

Elite legal professionals were not deterred, however, and continued to work to increase internal standards of membership. The AALS worked aggressively to raise the educational standards of admission to their own professional association, including adoption of the case method, a full-time faculty, a large library, a three-year length of study, and higher prerequisites for admissions. Harvard Law School, not surprisingly, was the gold standard.⁹³ The AALS focused in particular on the provision that law schools should require two years of college to enter, and only graduates of those law schools should be allowed admission to membership in the AALS and ABA. This requisite was strongly opposed by evening law school leaders like Gleason Archer, who feared it would create a “college monopoly” on legal education.⁹⁴ Although many ABA members shared Reed’s views, the AALS worked to influence the policies of the ABA by strategically packing a 1920 subcommittee meeting of the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions in order to ensure their own nominee, Elihu Root, would conduct a favorable report. In 1921, the same year of the Reed report, the ABA Section of Legal Education brought forward Root’s set of recommendations and successfully passed the two-year college requirement through the ABA.⁹⁵ These and future membership requirements helped pressure schools to conform, but because the practice of attorneys was ultimately determined by state law, many schools and lawyers did not meet their requirements.⁹⁶

⁹² Stevens, *Law School*, 114.

⁹³ Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers*, 121.

⁹⁴ Gleason Leonard Archer, *Is a College Monopoly of the Legal Profession Desirable?* (Boston: Gleason L. Archer, 1927).

⁹⁵ Stevens, *Law School*, 115; Archer, *College Monopoly*.

⁹⁶ In the aftermath of the Reed report and through the 1920s, the ABA and AALS would work together to try to raise standards for membership. The ABA came to accept the legitimacy of part-time schools, but with increasing standards, including raising length of the degree-program, full-time faculty requirements, and library requirements. Stevens, *Law School*, 173–76.

In 1927, still only about half of states met ABA requirements, and only one third of law schools belonged to the AALS.⁹⁷

Ultimately, the Great Depression spawned a wave of legislative action that the AALS had long sought. As the incomes of lawyers fell, many marginal lawyers left the profession, and struggling proprietary evening schools, facing enrollment decline, were forced to close. The remaining lawyers were more amenable to the argument that the profession was “overcrowded” and that more strict requirements for practice should be imposed. In 1934, the Massachusetts Supreme Court adopted the “college monopoly” requirement as their own: applicants to the bar were to have had two years of college study and completed law school.⁹⁸ Nationally, the percentage of students in ABA approved schools increased from 32% in 1932 to 64% by 1938. While in 1932, 17 states required the two-year college standard, 42 states did by 1938.⁹⁹

By 1940, the demographic composition of lawyers had shifted significantly. New ethnic groups were entering the profession in great numbers. The vast majority of these immigrants were Jewish: in 1940, 36% of Boston lawyers were of Russian Jewish heritage. At the same time, the access of male immigrant lawyers came with the exclusion of women and African Americans. Women comprised less than 7% of practicing lawyers in Boston in 1940.¹⁰⁰ As late as 1967, there were only 60 practicing African American lawyers in the entire state of Massachusetts.¹⁰¹ In addition, the legal profession resembled more of a steep hierarchy than even before. The success of evening law schools as a means of access to law fueled a shift from the apprentice model to the school-based training model. In 1940, 62% of all practicing Boston lawyers had at least four years of higher

⁹⁷ Ibid., 174.

⁹⁸ Jones, *Discovering the Public Interest*, 96; Koenig and Rustad, “The Challenge to Hierarchy in Legal Education,” 200–202.

⁹⁹ Stevens, *Law School*, 177.

¹⁰⁰ IPUMS, 1940.

¹⁰¹ Jones, *Discovering the Public Interest*, 115.

education.¹⁰² However, elite practitioners and law schools forged links to local, regional, and national professional associations, through which they helped set the standards for accreditation to maintain the class-based, racial, religious, and gender characteristics of practicing lawyers. A positive feedback cycle was generated in which cultivating a higher reputation by adopting the practices of elite schools became a means to draw in students or gain funding. Elite law schools attached to universities, becoming increasingly selective and establishing stronger ties to elite professionals through generations of alumni, could stay at the top. This ongoing race to the top in the legal profession fueled a steep credentialed hierarchy, with distinct types of training institutions linked to the demographic composition, prestige, and type of law practiced by distinct strata of lawyers.

Part II: Education as a Profession

Of all occupations in the urban Northeast in the nineteenth century, teaching had the most formalized school-based training process. A central component of the common school movement of the 1840s and 1850s, best known for its goal of providing primary school education to all citizens, was to formalize and professionalize the process of teacher training through public Normal schools. Massachusetts opened its first Normal school in Bridgewater in 1840, and Boston opened a city Normal school in 1852. A mandatory examination to teach in the public common schools was introduced in 1858; to teach in public high schools, a college degree was required.¹⁰³

Gender structured and drove the development of institutions of teacher training. In the mid-nineteenth century, the few public high schools in existence were primarily college-preparatory institutions, and they were exclusively for male students, taught by male college graduates. In the

¹⁰² *IPUMS*, 1940.

¹⁰³ *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston of 1858* (Boston: George Rand & Avery, City Printers, 1859), 31, 151, 156.

lower grammar and primary schools, male teachers were “masters,” and female teachers, who by this time made up the majority of the teaching force, were “assistants.”¹⁰⁴ These women typically trained in private academies or seminaries, since no public high schools, let alone colleges, were yet open to them. Horace Mann, the first Massachusetts school superintendent and leader of the common school movement, believed women were “natural” teachers of young children and advocated for free, public institutions to train them.¹⁰⁵ Women teachers in Massachusetts were also paid an average of 40% of the salaries paid to their male counterparts.¹⁰⁶ Although there was widespread female demand for a women’s high school in Boston since at least the 1820s, women’s secondary and higher education faced strong political opposition.¹⁰⁷ A Normal school, justified not on the basis of women’s rights but on the basis of public interest in teachers to instruct an educated citizenry, was the politically feasible alternative in 1852.¹⁰⁸ Only in the 1870s, when the first women’s colleges opened, did Boston separate out the function of a Girls High School from the Normal School, and the Normal school became a one-year post-secondary course.¹⁰⁹ By 1884, to apply for an

¹⁰⁴ This naming practice grew out of the traditional division of labor in early grammar schools: each school had a male “master,” one or more male sub-masters, and additional “female assistants.” A gender distinction also gave rise to the separation of the role of “principal” from “teacher”: in early male-staffed elementary schools, there was simply a male “principal teacher.” While subsequent nineteenth-century statistical summaries of teaching staff published by the School committee simply listed male and female “teachers,” in 1911 more detailed records were made of each type of teacher, and this gender divide clearly continued: there were no women listed as “masters,” and no men listed as “assistants.” “Regulations of the Schools,” in *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston 1858*, 145; *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools 1911* (Boston Printing Dept., 1911), 33; Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 124–25.

¹⁰⁵ “That women should be the educator of children, I believe to be as much a requirement of nature as that she should be the mother of children.” Horace Mann, *A Few Thoughts on the Powers and Duties of Woman: Two Lectures* (Syracuse: Hall, Mills, and Co., 1853), 82.

¹⁰⁶ Massachusetts had one of the lowest percentages in the country: states like Wisconsin and Michigan paid their female teachers 50-60% of what they paid male teachers. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 123.

¹⁰⁷ In 1826, a High School for Girls was established, but the demand was so high and overflowed the available space and resources devoted to the school, so the school committee decided to close the school in 1828. *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools 1929*, 93.

¹⁰⁸ For a detailed history of the founding of the Boston Normal School, see “Report of School Committee on Normal School,” in *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston 1873*, 229-273.

¹⁰⁹ *Annual Report of the School Committee 1872*, 7-8.

examination to become an elementary school teacher in Boston, one needed to have one year of teaching experience or to have graduated from the Normal school.¹¹⁰

The gendered hierarchy of teacher training institutions overlapped with class and ethnicity. Those women who sought academic high school education, many of whom continued on to new women's colleges beginning in the 1870s, tended to be wealthier, Protestant daughters. Those preparing to be elementary school teachers at the Normal school were lower middle class, and a greater proportion were second- and third-generation Irish Catholics. While the Normal school's graduating class of 1878 included only nine Irishwomen out of fifty-eight, by turn of the century half of Normal school graduates were of Irish heritage.¹¹¹ As the Boston public school system grew, the Normal school became the primary avenue for middle-class Irish daughters to access a respected profession. While high schools and private academies continued to draw their teachers from a select group of college graduates, in 1899, 60% of yearly public elementary school appointments in Boston were Normal school graduates.¹¹²

The Normal School and Ethnic Politics in Boston

The rising proportion of Irish Catholic teachers was a cause for concern among public school administrators. Superintendents and grammar school masters defended the Normal School as a key institution for elevating the teaching profession; this is why they supported an 1888 school regulation giving graduates of Boston Normal school preference over outsiders.¹¹³ However, they

¹¹⁰ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools 1884*, 36-46.

¹¹¹ Polly Kaufman, "Julia Harrington Duff: An Irish Woman Confronts the Boston Power Structure, 1900-1905," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 18, no. 2 (1990): 117-18.

¹¹² Edwin Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1899*, 49.

¹¹³ "Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Supervisors" in *Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Boston, 1888*, 240.

were concerned by the way its student demographics were shaping its reputation. Edwin Seaver, Superintendent of Boston Schools from 1880 to 1904, voiced these concerns throughout his tenure.¹¹⁴ In his 1899 annual report, he claimed it was a “false assertion that places in the Boston schools belong to Boston Normal graduates as a matter of right.” The need for the “best teachers,” he argued, was “infinitely superior to the claims of normal graduates to receive appointments.”¹¹⁵ Seaver noted that many grammar school masters complained about taking local girls “fresh” from the Normal school, and preferred teachers with more experience who came from outside Boston, or local female college graduates.¹¹⁶ The rise of female college graduates is depicted in Figure 5.8.

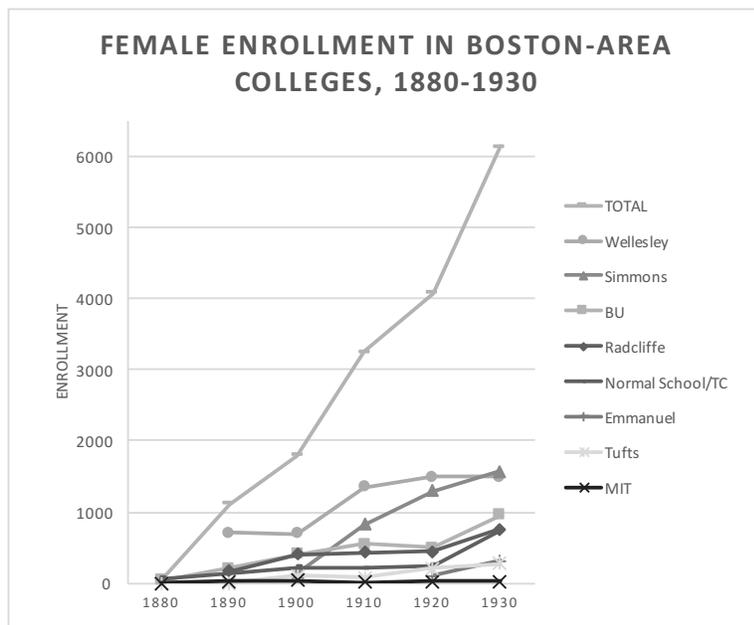


Figure 5.8

Sources: *Report of the Commissioner of Education* (Washington D.C: GPO) 1880-1910; *Biennial Survey of Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1920-30; *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools, 1880-1930*.

¹¹⁴ *First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools, 1881*, 3.

¹¹⁵ Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1889*, 44, 29.

¹¹⁶ Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1899*, 42; Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1903*, 96.

Seaver also hoped to attract more men, still a significant but declining minority of elementary school teachers, who were more highly represented in private schools. Seaver based his preference for “outsiders” on the premise that “staff that is recruited all from one source inevitably becomes narrow, conceited and unprogressive.” Instead, he asked rhetorically, “is not a liberal infusion of new blood necessary to the vigor and health of the school system?”¹¹⁷ In other words, the rising number of Normal graduates who expected a teaching position in the Boston public schools were crowding out the more desirable populations of wealthier, native-born, Protestant, and male teachers. Abbott Lawrence Lowell, a Harvard college and law school graduate who served on the Boston school board 1896-1899 and notoriously proposed a Jewish quota as President of Harvard a decade later, worked with Seaver to implement reforms that they believed would improve the teaching force of Boston. They successfully moved the power to appoint teachers from the school board to the Superintendent, and by 1898 helped put into place a “merit list” of Normal graduates, in which graduates were ranked and chosen for positions.¹¹⁸

Seaver and Lowell’s reforms, however, came up against strong opposition. The leader of this opposition was Julia Harrington Duff. Duff was an Irish Catholic woman who graduated from the Boston Normal School in 1878 and worked as a teacher in the Irish neighborhood of Charlestown for fourteen years before she married. From 1901 to 1906 she served on the Boston School Committee, and through her mobilization of Irish Catholics, especially women, had become a popular and powerful political leader. Her rallying cry was “Boston Schools for Boston Girls.”¹¹⁹ She argued that the criteria used by Superintendent Seaver to judge the “best” teachers was in fact a cover for discrimination against Irish women in the Boston school system. Under these reforms, she

¹¹⁷ Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1889*, 27-30, 50.

¹¹⁸ “Lowell will Head Harvard,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Jan 14 1909, p.1; Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1899*, 47.

¹¹⁹ Kaufman, “Julia Harrington Duff,” 118; Meaghan Dwyer-Ryan, “Ethnic Patriotism: Boston’s Irish and Jewish Communities, 1880-1929” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston College, 2010), 81.

cited cases of grammar school masters appointing incompetent “out of town” teachers over well-qualified Normal school graduates; it was “an affront to the intelligence of the Boston teacher to ever imply that such a person should be brought to Boston to give new blood, energy, and culture to Boston girls.”¹²⁰ By 1904, she succeeded in mobilizing enough support to push Seaver out of the superintendency. George Conley, the first Irish Catholic Boston School Superintendent of Boston, replaced him.¹²¹

Duff’s bigger fight, however, was not with Edwin Seaver, but with degree-granting colleges and their allies. For all their differences, Duff and public school administrators agreed that Normal school should be strengthened as the keystone institution of the Boston school system. Over the last decades of the nineteenth century, the school committee raised the admissions age from 17 to 18, increased the amount of practice teaching, lengthened the course from one to two years, and continued to add course offerings to match new curricular innovations in the elementary school.¹²² Twice in the late 1890s, Duff, local teachers and administrators successfully defeated proposals that would place the Boston Normal School under state control.¹²³ In 1901, ten years before Gleason Archer would make his case for degree-granting power for Suffolk Law School, Duff and local school administrators including Seaver advocated turning the Normal School into a degree-granting Teachers College. As private women’s colleges in the Boston area proliferated, their graduates entered positions in Boston’s girls’ high schools and elementary schools. For Duff, degree-granting power would allow normal graduates to fairly compete with college graduates, as well as allow them to teach in Boston’s high school, which required a college degree. Many school administrators

¹²⁰ “Mrs Duff’s Rap” *Boston Daily Globe*, Nov 12 1901, 4.

¹²¹ Kaufman, “Julia Harrington Duff,” 131.

¹²² *Annual Report of the School Committee 1878*, 28; *Annual Report of the School Committee, 1879*, 28; *Annual Report of the School Committee, 1893*, 15; *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1896*, 54.

¹²³ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools 1896*, 54; *Annual Report of the School Committee 1898*, 19; “Mrs. Duff’s Candidacy,” *Boston Post*, Nov. 27, 1900, 4.

believed that training for teaching was a separate body of expertise, distinct from an academic education in colleges. Degree-granting authority would elevate the standing of the Teacher's College as an institution that even college graduates might attend in order to attain professional training in education.

Private degree-granting colleges and their allies, including male high school teachers and political opponents of Julia Duff on the school committee, opposed the new Teacher's College plan. Male public high school teachers, nearly all alumni of private colleges, were concerned with the declining status of their own vocation due to feminization. High school teachers had been almost exclusively male in the mid-nineteenth century; by 1900 women college graduates comprised about 50% of high school teachers in Boston's public high schools. While male college graduates still entered the teaching profession, most did not stay: many taught as a stopgap measure before moving on to private-sector employment. Rather than a closer association between high school and elementary school teachers in a Teacher's College, male high school teachers hoped to develop professional educational courses within traditional private colleges and universities to attract more male college graduates. The institutional loyalties of high school men were exemplified in the formation of the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools in 1885, devoted to closer "articulation" between secondary schools and private colleges through standardized admissions requirements and high school teacher qualifications.¹²⁴ President Eliot, who was eager for Harvard to play a greater role in shaping the curriculum of local public high schools, famously chaired the National Educational Association's 1892 Committee of Ten Report, which presented a new vision of secondary education in the United States including modern pedagogical methods and subjects to satisfy college admissions requirements.¹²⁵

¹²⁴Arthur G. Powell, *The Uncertain Profession: Harvard and the Search for Educational Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 32.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 24–25.

In the 1890s, Harvard and its allies on the Boston school committee worked together to develop professional training for teachers under Harvard auspices. In 1891, in part to preempt a new collegiate-level state normal course considered by the state legislature, Harvard launched a one-year “Normal course” for Harvard graduates.¹²⁶ In 1892 Harvard began offering afternoon, Saturday, and summer courses taught by Harvard faculty to local teachers.¹²⁷ In 1896, while the Boston School committee required one year of teaching experience for applicants to the high school teacher’s examination, Eliot negotiated an exception to this requirement specifically for Harvard College graduates who had taken education courses.¹²⁸

The alliance between Boston school committee members, male high school teachers, and university leaders was also strengthened by their shared reaction to the changing political landscape in Boston. College and universities had deep ties to the local Brahmin elite which was concerned with the Irish control of Boston, and the school committee became one of the first sites in which the political struggle over the future of the city unfolded. In 1898, opponents of the growing number of women and Irish representatives on the school committee formed the Public School Association (PSA), using a campaign slogan “Keep the Schools out of Politics.”¹²⁹ The PSA was led by James Jackson Storrow, a Harvard College and Harvard Law graduate whom we met earlier in Chapter Two as the founder of Educational Centers, and in Chapter Four as the rival of James Fitzgerald who took credit for Boston’s High School of Commerce. By 1900, when Storrow became senior partner of the investment bank Lee, Higginson & Company, he had become active in civic affairs through the Boston School Committee. The PSA also included Storrow’s childhood friends and Harvard classmates: banker John Farwell Moors; educational reformer Joseph Lee; president of

¹²⁶ Ibid., 36–38.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 57.

¹²⁹ Kaufman, “Julia Harrington Duff,” 116.

the Boston Associated Charities Robert Treat Paine, Jr.; leader of the settlement movement Robert Woods; leading attorney Louis Brandeis; and future Harvard president A. L. Lowell.¹³⁰ These civic leaders believed in Brahmin stewardship of a city undergoing profound industrial and demographic changes, and led many of Boston's philanthropies and charities. They distanced themselves from overtly nativist and racist politics, but believed that the assimilation of immigrants was both necessary and possible, and many, including Robert Paine Jr., Joseph Lee, John Moors, A. L. Lowell, and Robert Woods founded or became members of the Immigration Restriction League.¹³¹ Some Jewish allies, such as Louis Brandeis and progressive department store owner Edward Filene, were outside the inner circle of the Brahmin elite, but also believed in an enlightened, non-partisan leadership of the city, and allied with the Brahmin class against Irish-American machine politics.¹³² These leading men, many with close ties to Harvard, formed a powerful bloc within the school committee.

The debate within the school committee over the Teacher's College in 1902 exposed the deep class, ethnic, and gendered fault lines that shaped teacher training in Boston. Duff and her allies had succeeded in securing widespread support for the proposal, including that of Republican Governor Winthrop Crane, Democratic Mayor Patrick Collins, and the gamut of state and city public school officials. In December of 1901, the school board voted to petition the state legislature for the establishment of the Teachers College. However, PSA members gained strength on the school board in that year's election, and in the first meeting of 1902, an opponent of the Normal School, Wilfred Bolster, was appointed to chair a joint committee on Legislative Matters and the

¹³⁰ Mina Carson, *Settlement Folk: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 65; Powell, *The Uncertain Profession*, 71. Dwyer-Ryan, "Ethnic Patriotism," 80.

¹³¹ Barbara Miller Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 100–140.

¹³² Dwyer-Ryan, "Ethnic Patriotism," 82.

Normal School.¹³³ Joining him were fellow PSA members James Storrow and Robert Treat Paine, Jr. In March of 1902, they presented a report rejecting the Teachers College plan.¹³⁴ Claiming that they had the interest of the whole city in mind, their report argued that funding a Teachers College would unfairly benefit a special class of teachers only.¹³⁵ Second, the committee members argued that a Teachers College would be an unnecessary duplication of efforts already provided for “admirably” in the private colleges and universities of the city. These efforts included both liberal arts collegiate education, which high school teachers received prior to teaching, as well as new professional training in education provided by universities such as Harvard. (They did not openly state their own conflict of interest as advisors and investors in these new programs).¹³⁶ Third, these committeemen repeated long-standing arguments that drawing teachers exclusively from the Normal School would hurt the caliber and quality of the teaching force. Since admission to the new Teachers College would likely be limited to Boston inhabitants, “The field from which to select raw material for teachers would become unfortunately restricted.” One supervisor claimed that the schools of Boston had deteriorated in the last ten years owing to the large number of Boston-trained girls, and that it would be better for the city to employ “country-bred and country-trained teachers” who had “more common sense and better judgment.” Finally, the Normal School had yet to prove itself worthy of degree-granting authority.¹³⁷

¹³³ “Mrs. Duff’s Ire,” *Boston Daily Globe*, March 26, 1902, 1.

¹³⁴ *Proceedings of the School Committee of the City of Boston* (Boston, MA: Rockwell & Churchill, City Printers, 1902), 116–19.

¹³⁵ As the report explained, “If the time has come when the city owes its citizens education beyond that of the high school, then what is required is a People’s University for all, not a Teachers College for a special class.” *Ibid.*, 116. This argument was likely only rhetorical. During debates in 1913 and 1920 over actual proposals to create a People’s University in the city of Boston, these same committee members and their private university allies were opposed.

¹³⁶ As they wrote: “It is well known that of late the improved theoretical training of teachers by extended courses in colleges teaching pedagogy...has increased with enormous rapidity. Time has not yet tested the results of this impulse, not fully shown the place in the educational system which its product is to occupy. To make haste slowly may avoid a painful retracing of the way, and may have needless waste.” *Ibid.*, 119.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 116–20.

Duff submitted her own minority report that countered each one of these arguments. She argued that, unlike doctors and lawyers, state and municipal law required children to be taught in schools, and thus had a responsibility to train teachers. The argument that private universities already offered educational programs merely reflected the elitism of Harvard and its allies because “it is only the children of the wealthy who can afford to attend the universities,” and thus “the city should provide similar instruction” for those who could not.¹³⁸ Duff defended the high caliber and standards of the Normal School, quoting the Head Assistant of the Boston Normal School who claimed that the level of work done in Normal school was already equivalent to that of degree-granting colleges. Despite widespread popular support, the Teachers College proposal was defeated in 1902. The inability to grant degrees continued to bar Normal School graduates from teaching in Boston’s high schools, and had the expected consequence of reducing the number of Normal School graduates entering elementary school teaching positions.¹³⁹

Duff’s campaign for the Normal School had won her a strong public following and full support of the Democratic Party, leading to Irish Catholic control of the school board by 1904.¹⁴⁰ In response, however, Storrow and his PSA allies successfully mobilized and passed legislation that reduced the twenty-four-member school committee, elected by district, to five committee members elected at large. As a quintessential progressive era administrative reform, Storrow promoted this plan as a non-partisan means of taking school governance out of the hands of corrupt partisan politics. The school committee plan was drawn up by Frank V. Thompson, who, while in his first position in Boston as headmaster of the High School of Commerce in 1906, took graduate courses at Harvard’s new division of education, and Henry Holmes, a Harvard College graduate who worked

¹³⁸ To this effect, Duff quoted a Harvard Professor who had claimed: “there is no life outside the university life for the preparation of teaching.” *Ibid.*, 120.

¹³⁹ From a height of 76% of yearly appointments in elementary schools going to Normal grads in 1900, this proportion dropped to 60% within three years. Seaver, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1903*, 98.

¹⁴⁰ Powell, *The Uncertain Profession*, 73.

with Thompson as English Department head in the High School of Commerce before joining Harvard faculty and becoming dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education.¹⁴¹ Storrow also helped ensure the election of his own protégé, Stratton Brooks, as Boston School Superintendent in 1905. As a University of Michigan graduate and assistant professor of education at the University of Illinois, Brooks faced opposition from many Bostonians who wanted someone local and more experienced.¹⁴² In his first report as Superintendent in 1906, Brooks heralded the new reorganized school committee of five. “It may be said that on Jan 1, 1906, the schools of Boston ceased to be governed by a board having a provincial attitude, and came under the control of a board having a national attitude towards the schools.”¹⁴³ That year, Brooks raised entry requirements to the Normal School, adopted a “civil service” system of teacher appointments that incorporated ratings of “personal characteristics,” and eliminated the preference given to Normal School graduates.¹⁴⁴ Julia Duff, who ran for a position on the five-person school board in 1907, sharply criticized these reforms.¹⁴⁵ She accused Brooks of using the merit list unfairly, citing a case of a female teacher from Dedham who was No. 20 bumped ahead of a local Roxbury teacher at the top of the list.¹⁴⁶ Duff

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 72, 101.

¹⁴² Boston City Counselor Mr. McCullough of Ward 13 launched an attack against Brooks’ appointment, citing the fact that Brooks had been accused of “jockeying” by the President of the Cleveland School Board, Brooks had never had any experience as a superintendent, and was effectively given the Superintendency of Boston “by the will of that master millionaire politician, Chairman James J. Storrow.” As McCullough went on, “If ever a political deal was consummated—if ever one-man-power was exemplified—if ever educational interests were set aside and personal desires substituted, it was in the election of Stratton D. Brooks as Superintendent of the Boston Schools.” *Reports of Proceedings of the City Council of Boston, 1906-1907* (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1907), 312.

¹⁴³ Brooks, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1906*, 10

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 14-21.

¹⁴⁵ As Duff charged, “The very first thing that the new school board did was cut out of the rules that clause that preference be given to Boston normal school graduates.” “Is Cheered by 2000 Persons,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec 9 1907, 6.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

lost this election bid, however, and the PSA bloc would dominate the school board for the next decade.¹⁴⁷

Under PSA leadership, the school committee developed closer ties to local colleges. In 1907 a Committee on College Credit was organized to collaborate with local colleges offering teachers part-time and summer courses toward a college degree.¹⁴⁸ Boston University, Simmons College, Wellesley, Tufts, Harvard and MIT each enlarged their course offerings and developed an outline of requirements and fees.¹⁴⁹ Based on the recommendation of this committee, college credit could be substituted for an exam in the promotion of teachers.¹⁵⁰ In 1914, the Boston school department agreed that a Harvard A.M. would be counted as the equivalent of two or three years of teaching experience.¹⁵¹ In this way, private colleges and universities, rather than the Normal School, increasingly dominated the field of professional teacher training.

University-based Schools of Education

As high school enrollment surged in the first decades of the twentieth century, so did the number of women students at colleges and universities training to become teachers. These institutions took advantage of a developing market for teacher training, but their policies also reflected the gendered hierarchies that shaped public institutions. Boston University took the lead, as evidenced by the large enrollment of teachers in Figure 5.9. While BU was the only co-ed university in Boston, its College of Liberal Arts was majority female. The proportion of women students rose from 40% in 1880, to

¹⁴⁷ Storrow continued as chairman of the school board; Joseph Lee began a nine-year tenure as member in 1908. Powell, *The Uncertain Profession*, 72.

¹⁴⁸ "Report of Committee on College Credit," in *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1908*, 90.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 93- 97.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁵¹ Powell, *The Uncertain Profession*, 132.

76% by 1900. The vast majority of these women intended to become secondary school teachers. By 1914, BU students intending to become teachers would major in the subject they planned to teach, conduct ninety hours of practice teaching, and take six hours of education courses with BU's newly appointed education professor, Arthur Wilde. BU also augmented its Saturday and afternoon courses for teachers, which it had launched in 1906.¹⁵² By 1918, Wilde was appointed dean of a new separate two-year School of Education, offering practicing teachers the opportunity to earn a bachelors degree.¹⁵³ While initially, School of Education students took courses in the College of Liberal Arts, over time the School of Education hired its own faculty and operated independently. The creation of a separate school of education, distinct from the liberal arts college, was not only an opportunistic response to new student demand in this area, but also likely an attempt to attract

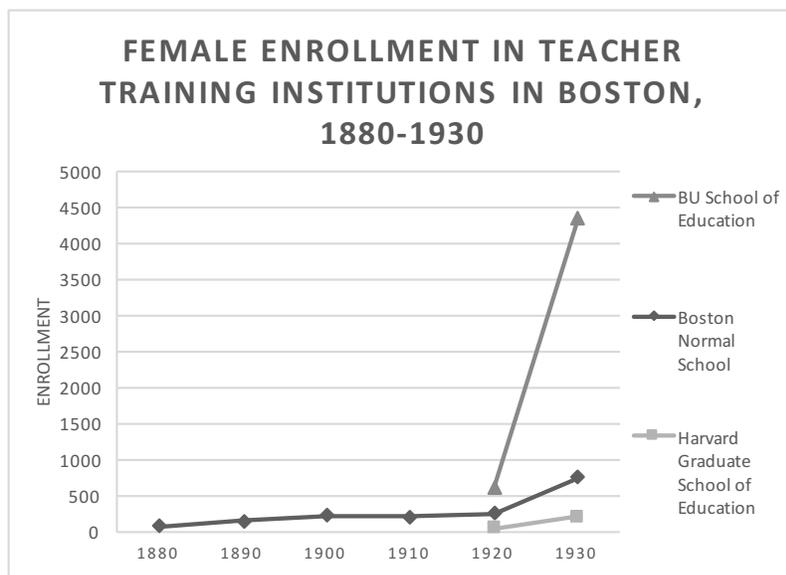


Figure 5.9

Sources: *Report of the Commissioner of Education* (Washington D.C: GPO) 1880-1910; *Biennial Survey of Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1920-30; *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools*, 1880-1930.

¹⁵² *Boston University Year Book, 1915-1916* (Boston, 1915) 125-6.

¹⁵³ Kathleen Kilgore, *Transformations: A History of Boston University* (Boston: Boston University, 1991), 132–33. The enrollment statistics depicted in the accompanying chart come from the *Report of the Commissioner of Education* (Washington D.C: GPO) 1880-1910; *Biennial Survey of Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1920-30; and *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools*, 1880-1930.

women away from the liberal arts college. This strategy was reflected most explicitly in BU's launch of its School of Business Administration and separate School of Secretarial Studies that will be examined in the next section.

The evolution of

Harvard's professional education

school also illustrates a similar gender dynamic. Harvard's professional educational program was shaped by the PSA alliance: Storrow, who had served on Harvard's Board of Overseers since 1897, helped create an official "Visiting committee" for Harvard's educational program in 1901, on which he served as a member and later chair.¹⁵⁴ Paul Hanus, a Prussian-born mathematics teacher who shared Eliot's educational philosophy, was appointed as the first Assistant Professor of the "History and Art of Teaching," within the Division of Philosophy, in 1891.¹⁵⁵ Hanus worked closely with Storrow, Lee, Woods, Moors, and Filene in developing the purpose and mission of professional education at Harvard.¹⁵⁶ His three first courses, open to college graduates, attracted only four male teachers.¹⁵⁷ Due to this lack of interest, in 1892 education courses were opened to male college undergraduates toward a bachelors degree, and in 1897, still facing low demand, were opened to female Radcliffe undergraduates. Eliot, who made enemies with the leaders of state universities by suggesting co-education might be justified "in a community which cannot afford anything better," seemed to be forced to accommodate in the case of his own school of education.¹⁵⁸ By 1906, enrollment, especially among undergraduate women, grew, and education had become an independent division of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.¹⁵⁹ By 1917, the percentage of women undergraduates in the division of education was 45%. The new Dean, Henry Holmes, was worried, as were many of his Brahmin reformist colleagues, about the feminization of the profession of education.¹⁶⁰ When the division received an endowment of \$2 million from the General Education

¹⁵⁴ Powell, *The Uncertain Profession*, 72.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 48–49.

¹⁵⁶ Lee, Storrow, and Moors were early members of the Visiting Committee, A. Lincoln Filene joined in 1913. *Ibid.*, 70–78, 109–10.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 57, 78.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Kett, *Merit*, 161, fn. 299.

¹⁵⁹ Powell, *The Uncertain Profession*, 80, 128.

¹⁶⁰ As historian Arthur Powell has argued, the division's reputation was "directly proportional" to its male enrollment. Women could attend in small numbers, but administrator's fears of becoming a "feminized enclave" drove policy decisions. *Ibid.*, 101,132-133, 154.

Board, Holmes converted the division into an exclusively Graduate School of Education offering a Doctorate and a Masters of Education, immediately eliminating virtually all female students.¹⁶¹ When female graduate student enrollment, primarily in the one-year Masters program, caught up at nearly 50% by 1924, Holmes eliminated this program entirely and replaced it with a two-year Masters degree program.¹⁶² Holmes' efforts to deter female enrollment through additional credentials, however, were repeatedly outpaced by demand. By 1929, women's enrollment at the Graduate School of Education at 206 students surpassed men's enrollment of 178.¹⁶³ At the same time, these repeated policy changes drove a steep credentialed ladder.

The curricular content of Harvard's school of education also reflected, and reinforced, a gendered distinction within the profession between teaching and administration. By 1900, Harvard's education department shifted its focus from training future teachers to training for new types of educational experts, a shift made in part to attract more male students. While, through the 1920s, about 10% of male Harvard students became schoolteachers after graduation, public school teaching in particular offered comparatively low status, low pay, and rising teacher certification requirements turned college graduates away.¹⁶⁴ Those who chose to prolong their study in the field of education increasingly entered administrative and research positions. Eliot had established an Appointment Committee in 1897, consisting of an Appointment Secretary and a professor from each department of FAS, to help place male college graduates in teaching and faculty positions.¹⁶⁵ Through the work of this committee, Eliot and Hanus deepened their extensive network of local school systems across

¹⁶¹ Graduate enrollment had been the only area of enrollment that was still predominantly male: in 1914, 94% of grad students were men. *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁶³ *Biennial Survey of Education 1928-1930* (Washington: U.S. GPO, 1932).

¹⁶⁴ "Vocational Preferences in the Class of 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926," Box 94, Folder: Vocational Studies, Harvard, 1924-1929, OCS. Powell, *The Uncertain Profession*, 138-39.

¹⁶⁵ This was modeled on a placement system at Oxford founded in 1892. *Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1900-01* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1902), 10-13

the country, and Harvard placed more of its students in positions as principals and superintendents around the Northeast. The *New England Journal of Education* reported in 1900: “Several important selections of superintendents and high school principals this season have established beyond question the efficacy of the department of education at Harvard University under Professor Paul Hanus. The man who takes that course and wins the respect and confidence of President Eliot and Professor Hanus is as sure of a good position as any man can be of anything.”¹⁶⁶ The Division of Education launched its own Committee on Appointments by 1917, which became a separate office within the Graduate School of Education in 1920. This office handled hundreds of requests and placed dozens of graduates annually.¹⁶⁷ While a substantial proportion of placements were still as secondary school teachers, the majority were in administrative or college faculty positions.¹⁶⁸

New positions in school administration proliferated alongside school reform movements, promoted as potential careers for Harvard’s male graduates. Most of these movements were led by members of Storrow’s reformist circle. Vocational guidance was one example. As noted in Chapter Three, the philanthropic Vocation Bureau of Boston founded in 1907 worked with the Boston public schools to train and appoint vocational counselors in every public elementary and high school. When the bureau’s director Meyer Bloomfield eventually left the school-centered guidance movement for the industry-centered personnel management movement in 1917, the Bureau was absorbed by Harvard as the Bureau of Vocational Guidance. In 1919, Edward Filene persuaded philanthropist and nursery-school pioneer Pauline Shaw to endow a faculty position in educational guidance at Harvard. This position was given to John Brewer, a former Los Angeles high school

¹⁶⁶ Powell, *The Uncertain Profession*, 57, 64–66.

¹⁶⁷ “Record of Positions from 1917-1924,” Folder: Annual Report, Box 1, Graduate School of Education Placement Office Records 1919-1932, University Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

¹⁶⁸ “Appointments made Nov. 1, 1917 to Nov. 1, 1918,” and “Positions Secured by the division of Education Committee on Appointments – Nov. 1, 1918- October 25, 1919” Folder: Annual Report, Box 1, Graduate School of Education Placement Office Records 1919-1932, University Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

teacher and graduate of Harvard's division of education, also appointed as the new director of the Bureau of Vocational Guidance. Brewer oversaw a period of extensive research production on vocations and helped build the new field of school-based vocational guidance.¹⁶⁹

Another emerging reform movement and professional specialization was educational measurement. In 1911 Harvard President Lowell tried to lure Edward Thorndike, a behaviorist scientist who helped develop the field of intelligence testing, away from Teachers College in New York. When he declined, Lowell appointed Thorndike's protégé Walter Dearborn, who later launched a Psycho-Educational Clinic to study mental testing at Harvard.¹⁷⁰ The Boston school department opened a Department of Measurement and Investigation in 1914, directed by Frank Ballou, a student at Teachers College and research fellow at Harvard. In Ballou's view, the jurisdiction of his department was vast: the "proper function" of such a department is "the investigation of any educational problem which the school authorities have to solve."¹⁷¹ As one of its first projects, the DEIM was tasked with reforming the merit list on which teacher promotions were based.¹⁷² The revised procedures for teacher promotion were lauded by the School Superintendent as "one of the most notable achievements in recent school administration."¹⁷³ Under Ballou's direction in 1921, the Boston public schools also became one of the first school systems to administer intelligence tests, and the total number of 15,448 tests was purportedly "the largest

¹⁶⁹ Powell, *The Uncertain Profession*, 118–21; John M. Brewer, *History of Vocational Guidance: Origins and Early Development* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942); Meyer Bloomfield, *The Vocational Guidance of Youth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911); Daniel Bloomfield, *Selected Articles on Employment Management* (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1919); Meyer Bloomfield and Frederick J. Allen, *Vocational Guidance and the Work of the Vocation Bureau of Boston* (Boston: Vocation Bureau, 1915).

¹⁷⁰ Powell, *The Uncertain Profession*, 98–106. See also Records of the Psycho-Educational Clinic, 1927-1947, Harvard University Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

¹⁷¹ Ballou, *High School Organization: A Constructive Study Applied to New York City* (Yonkers-on-Hudson: World Book Company, 1914).

¹⁷² Dyer, *Annual Report of the Superintendent* (1915), 28. This is not surprising, given Ballou's great interest in the topic: see his book *The Appointment of Teachers in Cities: A Descriptive Critical and Constructive Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915).

¹⁷³ Burke, *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1922*, 29.

number of elementary school children which has been tested in any school system.”¹⁷⁴ Ballou staffed his department with college-educated researchers, helping to create a selective and prestigious stratum of experts within the school system.¹⁷⁵ The department coordinated a program for every Normal School senior to work for the department for a period (subordinate to its male college-staff), and for every female Clerical School student to perform statistical tabulations for the department as part of their curriculum.¹⁷⁶ The DEIM’s activities thus quickly pervaded the operations of the school system and the lives of public school teachers.¹⁷⁷ Julia Duff, long skeptical of “fad and fancies” in the Boston public schools, criticized these new initiatives for shifting the balance of decision-making power and funding away from teachers. In addition, Duff argued that because the Normal school did not offer specialized training in these emerging fields, only private college graduates had access to these staff positions, another mechanism of exclusion.¹⁷⁸

Teachers themselves expressed skepticism of the burgeoning stratum of educational experts in the public schools. In her graduation oration for the Normal School class of 1917, Normal school graduate Dorothy M. O’Brien satirized the Department of Investigation and Measurement:

¹⁷⁴ Kallom, “Appendix A,” *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1921*, 28. The Department had initially requested 20,000 tests from the School Committee, but the Business Agent pointed out that the cost of these tests would exceed total spending on the Department in one year, so this number was lowered to 17,000. Minutes of the Board of Superintendents, February 15-2, Vol. 36 (1921), 93. Board of Superintendents Proceedings 1907-1953, School Department Records, Boston City Archives, Boston, MA.

¹⁷⁵ Ballou believed a close partnership between the public school system and educational research centers was mutually beneficial. He wrote: “When educational research is carried on jointly by a department of education in a university and the school authorities of that city, it combines two purposes. The department of education engages in it to promote the scientific study of educational problems and to assist in their solution....The school system engages in such work chiefly to improve educational conditions and practices in that city. Such educational research as is undertaken, therefore, should be of mutual advantage and should combine both purposes. Ballou, *Scales for the Measurement of English Compositions*, The Harvard-Newton Bulletins No. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 3.

¹⁷⁶ Ballou, “Appendix A,” in *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1915*, 110-12.

¹⁷⁷ The work by teachers was seen as particularly useful as a means of promoting the work of the department: “Those teachers who render temporary service in the department gain a valuable insight into the character and significance of educational measurement. They will go back to their respective schools with a new interest and a new point of view toward the teaching problem.” Ballou, “Appendix A,” in *Annual Report of the Superintendent, 1915*, 110.

¹⁷⁸ “Her Greeting Warm: Mrs. Duff Addresses a Large Audience in Charlestown” *Boston Daily Globe*, December 9, 1907, 6.

“Speaking of next year makes me think of what is expected of us in our profession, and the word ‘Efficiency’ flashes into my mind. The poor old world is being speeded up by that slogan. It has hit the teaching profession, too, and we have our Department of Investigation and Measurement. What do they investigate? Everything – even our most secret thoughts, words, and actions...What do they measure? ...everything that can possibly be measured is measured. ...My friends in the profession no longer eat at noon, for they must save time. One munches a bar of chocolate as she works; another needs only a glass of water and a date to keep alive the spark of life...Just think what we are coming to! Beware that you do not become a pompous five-foot measuring stick. I am a healthy-looking specimen now, but I feel that I am not for long in this sphere. Efficiency takes hold of me.”¹⁷⁹

O’Brien’s ridicule reveals the resentment of teachers to a rising number of administrative experts that would progressively control their everyday work experience. The divide between teachers and administrators reflected a gender, ethnic, and class-based elite strategy of distinction among educational elites. While a political landscape with powerful advocates of Boston’s immigrant population meant that elites could not close popular institutions like the Normal School (or Suffolk Law School), they could reshape the training landscape through professionalizing strategies. Graduates of the Harvard Graduate School of Education monopolized the most prestigious leadership positions in school administration and research, while female college and Normal School graduates became public school teachers.

In 1922, two years after Harvard’s School of Education became a graduate school, the Normal School finally won authority to offer bachelor’s of education degrees, and in 1924, the Normal School was renamed the Teachers College of the City of Boston.¹⁸⁰ In his 1925 report, the new Superintendent Jeremiah Burke, a Maine native who had worked as a school superintendent since 1893 and as assistant superintendent in Boston since 1904, defended public professional

¹⁷⁹ Dorothy M. O’Brien, “Oration,” in *The Alpha: The First Year Book of the Boston Normal School* (Boston: Boston Normal School, 1917), 75-76.

¹⁸⁰ “Rules of the School Committee and Regulations of the Public Schools,” in *Documents of the School Committee for the Year 1926, Vol. II* (Boston, 1927), 292-295.

teacher training.¹⁸¹ Like Archer, who railed against the “college monopoly” in legal training, Burke criticized the dominance of traditional private colleges for monopolizing the pathway into the profession of education. Most college graduates who became teachers, men or women, still did not have any specific teacher training. Burke accused traditional colleges of promoting an “aristocracy of intellect” by sending out college graduates into the teaching force who believed that academic training was far more important than practice teaching.¹⁸² Despite Burke’s defense, elite universities like Harvard had already consolidated the liberal arts college degree as the preferred credential for future teachers, and the university as the site of professional training for education. This preference reflected not only institutionalized cooperation since the 1890s, but also the ethnic, class, and gender demographics of these private institutions. As elite universities set the highest standard of prestige, including the power to grant degrees, the Normal School was pressured to conform to be able to compete, and its advocates like Julia Duff sought this mark of legitimacy. This competitive credentials race solidified the importance of schooling over experience, but also fueled a differentiated hierarchy based on school reputations. In Boston, ultimately, the Teacher’s College could not compete for long. After nearly shutting during the Great Depression due to lack of funding, in 1951 the Teacher’s College was absorbed into the State College system and abandoned its specific teacher training function when it became a State College in 1960. Professional schools of education in Boston, tied to private universities, would continue to dominate training for the highest positions in education.

¹⁸¹ Burke had been the favored contender for Superintendent among many school board members in 1905, when Storrow ensured Stratton Brooks’ appointment instead. “Tribute to Dr. Jeremiah E. Burke,” *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1931*, 6; Burke, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1925*, 23-28. *Reports of Proceedings of the City Council of Boston, 1906*, 312.

¹⁸² Burke, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1925*, 27.

Part III: Business as a Profession

Unlike the bar exam in law or the teacher's examination for public school teaching, access to the top positions in the business world were not rooted in credential-based training in the nineteenth century. In one national survey of U.S. business leaders, in 1900 less than 20% were college graduates, and of those who became leaders between 1921-1940, just over 50% were.¹⁸³ But pathways into the "profession" of business as managers and executives underwent a significant transformation during this period. Small companies run by a few members of a family persisted through this period, but they were overshadowed by the increase of large corporate firms with a bureaucratic management structure and dozens or hundreds of white-collar staff. As we explored in Chapter Four, men and women, many middle-class and second-generation immigrants, seeking entrance into white collar employment led to the enormous expansion of proprietary commercial schools in the late nineteenth century. As public high schools expanded into this student market, many proprietary schools were pressured to refashion themselves as post-secondary collegiate institutions, more directly in competition with traditional colleges (although nearly all lacked degree-granting authority). Just as elite law and medical schools accused their proprietary competitors of being amateur and exploitative, traditional colleges issues similarly harsh critiques of proprietary business schools, often veiled criticism of the influx of middle-class, immigrants and women into the world of business.

In response, traditional colleges and universities also adopted strategies to maintain their position of wealth, status, and prestige by strengthening their ties to leading businessmen in the region.¹⁸⁴ In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the relationship between business and traditional

¹⁸³ Mayo, *Paths to Power*, 122.

¹⁸⁴ David Levine's analysis of the marriage between business and college completely overlooks non-degree-granting business schools, which allows him to begin his story in 1917 instead of decades earlier. "Business Goes to the

colleges was fraught. While the financial elite of Boston had institutional ties to liberal arts colleges, many businessmen were ambivalent about the “college man” whom they considered condescending and impractical. Similarly, many professors and leaders of traditional colleges disdained the teaching of vocational subjects like business. However, the growth of the number of alumni in business pressured liberal arts colleges like Harvard to reorient themselves: increasing curricular options, launching new degree-granting business programs, shaping their student body through admissions policies and degree requirements, and developing alumni networks and placement services to place graduates in leading business firms.¹⁸⁵ University leaders also promoted the liberal arts college degree as the best credential to enter into the higher ranks of management and executive positions. As women enrollment in proprietary schools and public commercial courses surged, women’s liberal arts colleges, like their male counterparts, similarly re-oriented themselves to the business world in order to stay competitive and prestigious. Women’s colleges developed their alumni networks and placement strategies to place predominantly white, middle to upper class women in positions as secretaries, stenographers, and office or store managers, which, although subordinate to male positions, were carved out as the highest status positions for women. For those who had first received a broad collegiate education, Harvard University opened the first graduate school of business administration, to train an even more exclusive stratum of management experts. By strengthening the channels that placed selected graduates into the top firms, elite universities cultivated distinct reputations for their institutions and orchestrated the marriage of university graduates and corporate leadership. By setting the standards of prestige and lending political support to their preferred institutions, elite institutions helped shape an elaborate business hierarchy.

Colleges,” in Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940*, 45–67. Some studies of the rise of college-going explain this transformation primarily in cultural terms, such as Daniel A. Clark, *Creating the College Man: American Mass Magazines and Middle-Class Manhood, 1890-1915* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010). I focus instead on broader institutional and labor market changes.

¹⁸⁵ In this section I focus on Harvard as a model liberal arts college, but also contextualize its development within a broader landscape of business training institutions in the Boston area.

The College Man in Business

Harvard University's reorientation to the business world was already underway by the late nineteenth century, and allowed its college to maintain the highest enrollment of male students in the Boston area, depicted in Figure 5.10.¹⁸⁶ Reformist president Charles Eliot, as we have seen, was a fierce critic of proprietary commercial schools, which he called "sham institutions," but he was not opposed to business education on principle.¹⁸⁷

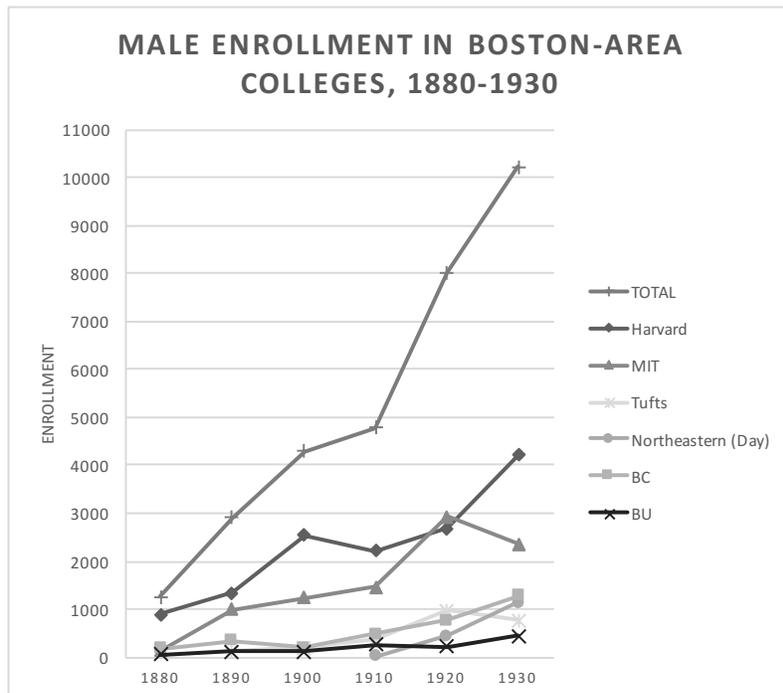


Figure 5.10

Sources: *Report of the Commissioner of Education*, 1880-1910; *Biennial Survey of Education*, 1920-30; *Annual Statistics of the Boston Public Schools*, 1880-1930.

¹⁸⁶ The enrollment statistics depicted in the accompanying chart come from the *Report of the Commissioner of Education* (Washington D.C.: GPO) 1880-1910 and *Biennial Survey of Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1920-30.

¹⁸⁷ "Our Trade At Stake," *The Boston Herald*, Oct. 31, 1899, 12.

Eliot supported what he called an “upper commercial school,” that was “parallel with a college or scientific school,” to train a middle tier of businessmen: public accountants, merchants, managers, and foreign consuls.¹⁸⁸ This was the original vision of the public male-only High School of Commerce in 1906, which Eliot supported. But even beyond this level, for true “captains of industry,” Eliot believed that a general liberal arts education was the best preparation.¹⁸⁹ This liberal arts education, which he implemented at Harvard College, included modern sciences, social sciences, and foreign languages, with built-in flexibility for students. Eliot supported the efforts of Economics professors such as Frank Taussig to organize business-related courses for undergraduates, such as Principles of Accounting in 1900.¹⁹⁰ The small minority of Harvard graduates entering business grew into a majority: in 1897, 15-20% of Harvard graduates entered positions in business; by 1908, 50% did.¹⁹¹ Business far outnumbered any other occupational choice among graduating seniors: through the 1920s the second largest choice was law at around 15%, and teaching at around 10%.¹⁹² Business remained by far the most popular area of employment for the next decades, only dropping below 40% at the onset of the Great Depression.¹⁹³

From the perspective of the university, in addition to curricular changes the most important factor in forging links between traditional colleges and business firms were alumni. While in the fields of law and education, professional associations and local government played an important role in legally structuring the credentials of practitioners, firms hired and trained whichever employees they wanted. Each educational institution, therefore, worked to cultivate personal relationships with

¹⁸⁸ Charles Eliot, “Commercial Education,” *Educational Review* 18, no. 5 (December 1899): 417–20.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 421.

¹⁹⁰ Jeffrey L. Cruikshank, *A Delicate Experiment: The Harvard Business School, 1908-1945* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1987), 26.

¹⁹¹ Khurana, *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands*, 111.

¹⁹² “Committee on Choice of Vocations,” “Vocational Preferences in the Class of 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926,” Box 94, Folder: Vocational Studies, Harvard, 1924-1929, OCS.

¹⁹³ “1930 Questionnaire #3,” Box 94, Folder: Vocational Studies, Harvard, 1924 to 1929, OCS.

company representatives and establish their reputation as a source of potential employees. They did this through both informal and formal placement services for college graduates. Placement services within schools had been pioneered by proprietary business schools decades earlier, which used extensive advertising campaigns to market their schools and graduates, including the distribution of promotional booklets to employers that included short bios and photographs of their alumni seeking employment.¹⁹⁴ Universities like Harvard, despite their criticism of the marketing tactics of proprietary schools, would adopt these practices to promote their own graduates. By 1925, 44% of large universities in the United States had organized placement bureaus.¹⁹⁵

College graduates had long relied on recommendations from professors, or connections through their classmates and families, to secure introductions and potential employment. Professors had ties to specific employers through their own social networks, and even after formal placement services developed at Harvard, employers continued to rely on professors for recommendations in fields like engineering and the physical sciences, where specific technical knowledge was desired.¹⁹⁶

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company reported, “Mr. Kelly, who is in charge of vacuum tube development, was in Boston and talked to one or two of his friends in your Physics

¹⁹⁴ Since 1882 Bryant & Stratton advertised the “frequent application of merchants and others for students of this school to fill positions in their counting rooms and offices,” and the assistance offered to students by their Principal who had successfully placed students in business positions across the country. *Twenty-Second Annual Prospectus of the Bryant & Stratton Commercial School 1882* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1882), 24. Their 1900 Catalog mentions an “Employment Department” and advertises that there were “nearly twelve hundred direct applications for graduates to take positions in business,” and that there was no charge for placement service to the student or employers. *Thirty-ninth Annual Prospectus of the Bryant & Stratton Commercial School 1900-1901* (Boston, 1900). Burdett’s 1893 catalog lists dozens of testimonials from their graduates suggesting the school’s role in their employment: “the position you obtained for me...is everything that could be desired,” “many thanks for the situation obtained for me,” “accept my thanks...for the position you secured for me on leaving,” “I have to thank you for your kindness in offering me two positions since I graduated.” *How To Succeed: Annual Prospectus of the Burdett College of Business and Shorthand* (Boston, 1893), 37-40. A bulletin featuring testimonials for Burdett circa 1912 prominently advertises: “Burdett College Guarantees a Satisfactory Situation to Every Graduate.” “Burdett College Journal, Vol.XXX111 No. 1” Case 20: Education, Folder: Private Commercial School For Profit Survey 1914, Records of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, Baker Library, Harvard Business School. Harvard University. By 1923, Burdett’s College Employment service sent bulletins to local employers with photos of graduates, their interests and personal characteristics. *Man Power Highly Developed and Ready for Action: Capable Candidates for Business* (Boston, 1923) in Burdett College Misc. Pamphlets, Widener Library, Harvard University.

¹⁹⁵ Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940*, 63.

¹⁹⁶ Letter from Donald Moyer to Clarence Clewell, October 11, 1939, Box 43, Folder: Pennsylvania Association of School and College Placement, OCS.

Department. The Laboratories feel that they are likely to learn of the men with really unusual qualifications for development and research work in this way, and at Harvard they have written to the Dean of Engineering as well as the head of the Physics Dept.”¹⁹⁷ The Eastman Kodak Company asked to be provided with direct contact information and scheduled lunch meetings with the heads of the Engineering, Physics, and Chemistry Departments.¹⁹⁸

Formal placement offices soon took over the majority of placement coordination and employer networking. While Harvard’s Appointment Committee, founded in 1897, primarily placed students in positions as professors and teachers, this office coordinated with the Alumni Association for students seeking business positions, and the latter branch quickly outpaced the former.¹⁹⁹ By 1912, teaching and business placement services split in two: a University Appointment Office, placed under the Dean of Faculty, for teaching appointments, and an Appointment Office placed under the jurisdiction of the Alumni Association dealing exclusively with business and technical positions. By 1910, nearly 2,000 recent graduates had registered for the Alumni Appointment Office, and over the next decade, this office placed 100-200 graduates each year, a substantial proportion of each graduating class.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Letter from Donald Bridgman to Donald Moyer, April 14, 1936, Box 31, Folder: American Telephone and Telegraph Company, OCS.

¹⁹⁸ Letter to E. M. Billings, February 25, 1936; Letter from E. M. Billings to J. F. Dwinnell, February 11, 1936; Letter from Billings to J. B. Conant, October 21, 1938; Box 36, Folder: Eastman Kodak Company, OCS. Proctor & Gamble was also in direct communication with professors from Harvard’s engineering school and the medical school. Proctor and Gamble Company Card, January 1934, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Company, OCS.

¹⁹⁹ *Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1900-01* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1902), 10-13 Because of the important role of alumni in helping students find employment, starting in 1907, the Appointment Secretary also doubled as Secretary of the Alumni Association. “Edgar B. Wells Resigns” *The Cambridge Tribune*, May, 17, 1913, 1.

²⁰⁰ “Report of the Appointment Office” in *Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard 1910-11* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912), 257. By 1929, this office also merged with the student employment office, an office that coordinated part-time and summer work for current undergraduates. “Placement Office to Meet Seniors, *The Harvard Crimson*, October 31, 1929.

This office developed relationships with hundreds of employers, coordinating with Harvard clubs across the country.²⁰¹ The Alumni Appointment Office created a special bulletin to send to employers advertising potential candidates, including academic record, extracurricular activities, family background, race, religion, height, weight, personal appearance, and personality.²⁰² Large firms with personnel departments developed close ties to Harvard's placement officers. John F. Dwinell, who became the Director of Harvard's Alumni placement service in 1929, had previously been in charge of employment work at the New England Telephone Company.²⁰³ Placement officers and personnel managers overlapped in professional circles, such as at meetings of the Eastern Collegiate Placement Officers (EPCO), a professional association organized in 1926 by men's college placement officers at Harvard, MIT, Boston University, and Massachusetts Agricultural College.²⁰⁴ When Proctor and Gamble's employment manager, F. G. Atkinson, left the firm for a similar position at Macy's, he made sure to introduce Atkinson's replacement, David Watt, to the directors of Harvard's placement office.²⁰⁵ A few weeks later, Watt wrote to the assistant director about how much he enjoyed meeting him at the last ECPO meeting, and how much he looked forward to getting better acquainted when he visited Cambridge.²⁰⁶ It was through these professional networks that placement officers cooperated with each other and worked to standardize recruitment schedules

²⁰¹ By 1910 the office was receiving over 200 annual requests for employees from prospective employers; within a decade this number had risen to 500. Box 30, Folder: Alumni Placement Service, Harvard, General Printed Matter, OCS. "Report of the Appointment Office," *Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard 1910-11*, 257; "Report of the Appointment Office: the Harvard Alumni Association." *Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard 1918-19*, 252.

²⁰² Employers would then request more information about the candidates they were interested in interviewing or hiring. For example, see Letter from J. F. G. Miller to Harvard Alumni Placement Service, March 26, 1936, Box 46, Folder: B. F. Sturtevant Company, OCS.

²⁰³ Report of the Associated Harvard Clubs, May 15, 1930, Harvard Alumni Bulletin p. 31, 24, Box 30, Folder: Alumni Placement Services, Harvard General Printed Matter, OCS.

²⁰⁴ Walker W. Daly, "Appendix: Report of the Secretary for Student Employment," in *Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 1927), 329. See also Helen MacMurtrie Voorthees, *History of the Eastern College Personnel Officers, 1926-1952*. (Boston: T. Todd Co., 1952).

²⁰⁵ Letter from F. G. Atkinson to Donald Moyer, September 20, 1940, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Company, OCS.

²⁰⁶ Letter from David M. Watt to Donald Moyer, October 29, 1940, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Company, OCS.

and methods. MIT and Harvard regularly shared employer requests, and when Proctor and Gamble representatives were eager to begin interviewing seniors in the fall semester, Harvard, Yale, Princeton and MIT coordinated at an EPCO meeting to agree to adopt post-January visits only.²⁰⁷

Why did business firms hire college graduates? A human capital explanation of the relationship between education and work would focus on the technical skills students learned in school. Certainly, specialized technical knowledge was essential for certain jobs, especially technicians and engineers. Walworth Company called on Harvard for “experienced metallurgists”; Lever Brothers were “eager to see promising young chemists at any time” for “general industrial chemistry work.”²⁰⁸ Harvard’s placement offices compiled lists of students who had taken courses in physics, math, and advanced economics, the most desirable forms of specialized knowledge sought by employers.²⁰⁹ Technical knowledge, however, was a necessary but not sufficient condition. Kendall Mills wanted scientists who had the “ability to get along with others”; for a new chemist, they preferred someone with an “advanced degree and industrial experience, though personality and adaptability come first.”²¹⁰

Firms also distinguished between college graduates who would work as technical assistants, engineers, and researchers, and those they wanted to groom for supervisory and executive positions. For the latter group, background knowledge in the sciences was preferable, but social, personality characteristics, and extra-curricular participation were far more important. Proctor and Gamble sought “top-notch men” to become foremen and superintendent in their factories who were “men

²⁰⁷ Letter from Stuart Clement to R. W. Warfield, November 17, 1937, Letter from Moyer to Stuart Clement, November 19, 1937; Letter from Stuart Clement to Donald Moyer, November 22, 1937; Letter from Dwinnell to Stuart Clement, December 13, 1937, Letter from Ralph to Donald Moyer, Jan 25, 1940, Box 48, Folder: Yale University, OCS.

²⁰⁸ The Walworth Company Card, April 16, 1934, Box 48, Folder: The Walworth Company; Lever Brothers Company Card, November 18, 1929; January 16, 1930; August 2, 1938, Box 39, Folder: Lever Brothers Company, OCS.

²⁰⁹ “Concentrators in Physics,” “Concentrators in Math,” “Ec. 26b” 1937-1940, Box 30, Folder: Info re Business Recruiters and Student Concentrators, OCS.

²¹⁰ Kendall Mills Company Card, June 27, 1934; April 28, 1939; Letter from Warren Eustis to J. F. Dwinnell, November 12, 1940; Box 38, Folder Kendall Mills, OCS.

capable of developing into executives” and “not technical men.”²¹¹ As they explained, “Although good scholarship is very important, we are equally interested in men with outstanding personal characteristics and who have demonstrated qualities of leadership and managerial ability in their campus activities.”²¹² Extracurricular clubs and athletic teams were opportunities to demonstrate leadership qualities, as well as the social skill of being a team player.

Many other companies categorized employees into distinct “types,” one technical, the other executive.²¹³ The parallel development of MIT illustrates the distinction between these two types of college graduates. As MIT developed a reputation for training engineers, the bulk of requests for technical-trained men came to them instead of Harvard. Local manufacturing companies developed close relationships with MIT professors.²¹⁴ MIT’s success in the field of engineering, as well as financial concerns, led to repeated merger attempts by the leadership of Harvard and MIT between 1869 and 1912.²¹⁵ In the debates over a possible MIT-Harvard merger, the different identities and reputation of MIT and Harvard graduates were starkly revealed. Compared to Harvard, a greater proportion of MIT students were middle-class, nearly 30% of students were international, and there was even a small minority of female students.²¹⁶ The overwhelming majority of MIT alumni believed that a merger would destroy MIT’s independence as an engineering institute as opposed to a liberal

²¹¹ Proctor and Gamble Card, January 17, 1931; February 28, 1933, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Company, OCS.

²¹² Letter from David Watt to Donald Moyer, December 6, 1940, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Company, OCS.

²¹³ Dennison Manufacturing company for instance called for a “beginner in warehouse. Man of production type.” Dennison Mfg. Co. Card, March 9, 1937, Box 35, Folder: Dennison Manufacturing Company, OCS.

²¹⁴ Many MIT professors entered and exited the private sector regularly. In their annual reports, department heads would describe the employment success of their graduates; in fields such as chemical and electrical engineering, graduates were eagerly sought after. Department of Mechanical Engineering and Applied Mechanics reported “As usual, the number of opportunities for employment has so far exceeded the number of graduates that each one has had several positions from which to choose.” See *MIT, Annual Report of the President and Treasurer* (Boston: MIT, 1911), 73. See also *MIT, Annual Report of the President and Treasurer* 1902, 41; 1905, 48; 1906, 51, 1910, 68.

²¹⁵ Bruce Sinclair, “Mergers and Acquisitions,” in *Becoming MIT: Moments of Decision*, ed. David Kaiser (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 37–57.

²¹⁶ In 1910, MIT enrolled 102 international students, or 28% of all students. “Mechanic Arts High Criticised,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 15, 1910, 4.

arts college.²¹⁷ Critics of the merger like MIT President Francis Walker contrasted the hard-working and focused students of MIT with the Harvard undergraduate who could be seen “loafing in academic groves” and “browsing around among the varied foliage and herbage of a great university.”²¹⁸ There was some truth to this caricature. Harvard undergraduates in the early twentieth century were still overwhelmingly the sons of wealthy New Englanders and New Yorkers, and contemporaries noted that the social tone was set by those “club men” who lived in “gold coast” dormitories and ate in elite social clubs, with academic life almost incidental to the collegiate experience.²¹⁹

These divergent reputations, however, did have an impact on their graduates’ employment prospects. A prominent supporter of the merger plan in 1904 was John Ripley Freeman, a graduate of the class of 1876 and former MIT Alumni Association President, who headed a successful hydraulic engineering consulting firm.²²⁰ Freeman argued that MIT was only training the corporals of industry, while Harvard trained the captains. What MIT lacked was the additional cultural education that liberal arts college students received. Employers reaffirmed this distinction. President of the Walworth Manufacturing Company, Howard Coonley, said in the 1920s: “We find that the man who stands best in his college training as a student very seldom is a good executive. He is often a remarkable specialist...If I want to obtain engineers I go to an institution which specializes in training engineers of a certain type, but if I want an engineer executive I always seek a man who has

²¹⁷ Sinclair, “Mergers and Acquisitions,” 50.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 45–46.

²¹⁹ Morton Keller, *Making Harvard Modern: The Rise of America’s University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13–14. As William James described in a Commencement dinner speech in 1903, “the club aspect is so strong, the family tie so close and subtle among our Bachelor of Arts that all of us here who are in my plight, no matter how long we may have lived here, always feel a little like outsiders on Commencement day.” “The True Harvard,” *William James: Writings, 1902-1910* (New York: Library of America, 1987), 1126-1129

²²⁰ Sinclair, “Mergers and Acquisitions,” 49.

had a general course of engineering training.”²²¹ While the MIT-Harvard merger plan ultimately failed due to a legal technicality, MIT began to increase humanities and social science requirements in ways that reflected Freeman and Coonley’s observations and a broader shift in elite engineering education.²²² By the turn of the century, economist David Rich Dewey (the brother of philosopher John Dewey) advocated for the creation of a social science major at MIT.²²³ Dewey was instrumental in launching Course XV in Engineering Administration in 1914, “to fit men for administrative positions,” which included classes in law, history, and economics, in addition to Frederick Taylor’s ideas of scientific management.²²⁴ By 1925 MIT offered Masters degrees in engineering administration, and in 1938, with the donation of Alfred Sloan, alum of MIT and president of General Motors, Course XV became MIT’s Sloan School of Management.²²⁵ As other engineering schools in Boston grew, such as the YMCA Cooperative School of Engineering that would become Northeastern University in 1922, MIT graduates were groomed to enter the executive elite.

While a substantial minority of Harvard undergraduates entering business went into manufacturing companies, the majority went into banking, finance, and marketing.²²⁶ For these jobs, academic skill was important, but in a much more abstract sense. The investment bank Kidder, Peabody and Company wrote to the placement office, “one of the principal requisites” is “outstanding records scholastically, as such records indicate brains.” As they explained, “we are not

²²¹ James H. S. Bossard, *University Education for Business: A Study of Existing Needs and Practices* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931), 93.

²²² Noble, *America by Design*, 316.

²²³ Davis R. Dewey, “Teaching of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology,” *Journal of Political Economy* 18, no. 6 (1910): 434–37.

²²⁴ “Mechanic Arts High Criticised,” *Boston Daily Globe*, December 15, 1910, 4; Noble notes that, according to alumni, Course XV was “really a course in scientific management and Frederick Taylorism.” Daniel Nelson, *A Mental Revolution: Scientific Management Since Taylor* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992), 86–87.

²²⁵ Karl L. Wildes, *A Century of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at MIT, 1882-1982* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), 30,48.

²²⁶ In 1927, 13% of the class of 1924 had gone into manufacturing, 27% into banking or finance, and 29% distribution. “Committee on Choice of Vocations: Table 1: Class of 1924” Box 94, Folder: Vocational Studies, Harvard, 1924-1929, OCS.

looking for clerks; we have plenty of those. We are looking for the type of young men who have enough imagination and intelligence to work up into responsible positions.” Brains and “spark” was something intangible, but easy to identify. As Kidder wrote, “I never went to college myself, but I remember distinctly when I was at school that there were always some scholars who were head and shoulders above the others.”²²⁷ Even if employers did not attend college themselves, they possessed a vision of exactly the type of brilliant “college man” they wanted.

In the realm of marketing and sales, general academic skills were also valuable. The Employers Group, an insurance company, sought “those who possess better-than-average scholastic ability but have a large amount of common sense, judgment, ability to get along with others, and stick-to-it-iveness.”²²⁸ Kendall Mills wanted a young man for market research who was “young yet mature, with an analytical turn of mind...[a man who can give result] not as tables or figures but as interpretative and some times as complete plans for reorganization of sales territories and selling plans.”²²⁹ More often, however, in this realm, appearance and an affable yet aggressive personality were the primary requirements. The Excelsior Insurance Company wrote, “We have come to the conclusion that a chap of pleasing appearance, a good personality, and a flair for salesmanship, will fill the bill.”²³⁰ Proctor and Gamble sought a man for their marketing department who had an “aggressive and superior personality”; for their sales department, “men of dominant type” with an “impressive appearance.”²³¹ The Dennison Manufacturing Company specified that their salesmen:

²²⁷ Letter from Chandler Hovey to Donald Moyer, February 14, 1936; Memo March 16, 1936; Letter from Chandler Hovey to George Plimpton April 13, 1937; April 30, 1937; Box 39, Folder: Kidder, Peabody and Company, OCS.

²²⁸ Harold T. Young to J. Dwinnell, March 17, 1936, Box 36, Folder: Employer’s Group, The, OCS.

²²⁹ Letter from H. A. Secrist to J. F. Dwinnell, April 22, 1937, Box 39, Folder: Kendall Mills, OCS.

²³⁰ Robert C. Hosmer to James F. Dwinnell, August 15th, 1939, Box 36, Folder: Excelsior Insurance Company of New York, OCS.

²³¹ Proctor and Gamble Distributing Company Card April 21, 1931; January 18, 1934, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Co., OCS.

“must be a diplomat, good sales type. No timid souls.”²³² Ligget and Myers Tobacco Company wanted salesmen with “good presence, tall (5’10”), good selling personality, aggressive.”²³³

Some companies asked explicitly for information about race, ethnicity, and religion. Proctor and Gamble desired “men of good ability and personality, not in last quarter of class, and Christians preferred.”²³⁴ Kendall Mills requested Protestants exclusively.²³⁵ The International Business Machine Company (IBM) asked for photos of students and information about “what father does” because they believed “family background [was] important in estimating boy’s capacity and interest.”²³⁶ Because there were so few candidates who were not white Protestants, the placement officers tended to note exceptions with added descriptors or qualifiers. In subsequent correspondence about a prospective employee with Kendall Mills, director J. F. Dwinell wrote: “he is good-natured, cheerful, and does not betray too forcibly in his appearance that he is of Levantine origin.”²³⁷ A few days after Dwinell had sent manufacturing company Landers, Frary & Clark five recommendations for prospective cost accountants, he sent two more, explaining “It has, of course, occurred to me that you may not react favorably to Woodhouse’s record on account of his race. I realize that it is difficult to imagine a native of India being particularly successful in working with New Englanders. I want to reassure you, however, on this point. Woodhouse is extremely attractive and has made good with all kinds of people around here.”²³⁸ Over the next few years, Landers, Frary & Clark would continue to asked for detailed information about students’ “pedigree,” and followed up about

²³² Dennison Manufacturing Company Card, April 29, 1940, Box 35, Folder: Dennison Manufacturing Company, OCS.

²³³ Memo Ligget & Myers Tobacco Company, Nov. 10, 1936, Box 55, Folder: Employers – Boston, OCS.

²³⁴ Proctor and Gamble Distributing Company Card February 10, 1930, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Co., OCS.

²³⁵ The Kendall Company Card September 12, 1933, Box 39, Folder: Kendall Mills, Bauer and Black, OCS.

²³⁶ Memo from GFP January 25th, 1939; Letter from H. E. P. to Placement Office, February 20, 1941, Box 39, Folder: International Business Machine, OCS.

²³⁷ Letter from J.F. Dwinell to Mr. Eustis, March 21, 1941, Box 39, Folder: Kendall Mills, Bauer and Black, OCS.

²³⁸ Letter from J. F. Dwinell to R. H. White, May 23, 1933; May 29, 1933, Box 39, Folder: Landers, Frary and Clark, OCS.

specific names they considered unusual to ensure they were of the desired nationality.²³⁹ To the American Telephone and Telegraph Company looking for a statistician, the assistant director of the office reassured them: “although Bernstone is Jewish, he is one of the most popular men in the department.”²⁴⁰ These were instances in the record in which placement officers chose to recommend students despite their racial and religious characteristics – it is not knowable how many were passed over entirely.²⁴¹

More subtly, many descriptors that the placement office used to describe candidates were proxies for other characteristics, particularly clues about class. These features appear especially in correspondence about engineers, who tended to be from less wealthy backgrounds. Lower-class graduates were usually described as a “chap” with adjectives that connoted roughness and resilience: the son of a packing-house foreman and mechanical engineer by training was “a substantial chap”; a Catholic student recommended for production work was described as a “small but very husky sort of chap”; the son of a mining engineer recommended for production in a foundry was “a rugged, self-reliant chap who knows how to take it.”²⁴² Students from lower-class backgrounds typically attended public school, were the recipients of scholarships, and worked part-time during college and over summers. This personal history was made known to potential employers.²⁴³ The time these

²³⁹ For example, White wrote to the office: “The name Robert Bennink is a rather peculiar one. I would appreciate your advice as to the nationality of the man.” Assistant Director of the appointment office, Donald Moyer, reassured White that this man “is a protestant, a Congregationalist,” and “the only other [clue] I can think of giving you is the fact that his father is a bank officer and the further fact that the question of his racial background seems never to have arisen before.” Letter from R. H. White to Donald Moyer, February 8, 1937; April 13, 1936; Letter from Donald Moyer to R. H. White, April 15, 1936, Box 39, Folder: Landers, Frary and Clark, OCS.

²⁴⁰ Donald Moyer to Donald Bridgman, May 16, 1941, Box 31, Folder: American Telephone and Telegraph Co., OCS.

²⁴¹ In examining the majority of the placement records’ correspondence with employers concerning business occupations, I did not come across the mention of any African American students. OCS.

²⁴² Letter from J. F. Dwinnell to Robert Hosmer, September 5, 1939, Box 36, Folder: Excelsior Company of New York; Donald Moyer to R. R. Wallace, May 27, 1931, Box 31 Folder: American Steel and Wire; J. F. Dwinnell to S. T. McCall, March 14, 1939, Box 31, Folder: American Brake Shoe and Foundry Company, OCS.

²⁴³ J. F. Dwinnell to Harold L. Young, July 2, 1936, Box 36, Folder: The Employers Group; J. F. Dwinnell to S. T. McCall, March 14, 1939, Box 31, Folder: American Brake Shoe and Foundry Company; Letter from J. F. Dwinnell to Robert Hosmer, September 5, 1939, Box 36, Folder: Excelsior Company of New York; OCS.

students spent working also meant that they had to forego other opportunities, such as living in dorms and participation in extra-curricular activities, where students could build their social contacts and demonstrate their leadership qualities.²⁴⁴ Contemporary studies of college graduates in the 1920s confirm that those who had engaged in extracurriculars had higher future incomes than those who had not, and undergraduate employment had a negative correlation with future earnings.²⁴⁵ By providing this information to employers, placement officers likely exacerbated class disparities.

While Harvard's placement office promoted itself as a service to aid all students, in reality its top priority was to shape the reputation of Harvard. This reputation consisted of the class, racial, ethnic, and religious composition of its recommended graduates. Many studies of Harvard have explored discrimination, or "academic nativism," through policies of admission; in particular, President Lowell's proposed 15% quota to restrict the number of Jewish students at Harvard, which had grown from 7% of students in 1900 to 21.5% in 1922.²⁴⁶ Others have examined discriminatory policies during college, such as the segregation of the few African American students in college dorms and extracurriculars.²⁴⁷ Fewer studies have explored the differential paths of students after

²⁴⁴ Describing J. M. Smith, another "pretty substantial chap" who "spent every summer working," Dwinell added, "He was not able to live in one of the College dormitories but has commuted daily from Sommerville. This has prevented his taking a very active part in extra-curricular activities." J. F. Dwinell to Harold L. Young, July 2, 1936, Box 36, Folder: The Employers Group; OCS.

²⁴⁵ Based on a study conducted of Wharton School college graduates in the 1920s. Bossard, *University Education for Business*, 84.

²⁴⁶ "Academic nativism" is Marcia Synnott's term: Marcia Graham Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900-1970* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), xvii; Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 2006); Pak, *Gentlemen Bankers*, 146; Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy*, 1st ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999).

²⁴⁷ African American students comprised a very small number of Harvard college students throughout this period, likely no more than a few per class. The first African American student enrolled at Harvard college was Richard T. Greener in 1865, who subsequently became a philosophy professor and law school dean. Only in the 1970s would their numbers rise to 100 or more per class. Pak, *Gentlemen Bankers*, 147–57; Werner Sollors et al., *Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History of African-American Experience At Harvard and Radcliffe* (New York: NYU Press, 1993), 2–3; Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door*.

graduation, and in particular the role of placement services.²⁴⁸ Placement officers openly admitted, among alumni circles, that they did not help everyone that registered with their service. In a lecture to the Harvard Associated Clubs in 1930, Dwinnell explained that graduates could be classified into three categories. About 10% of each graduating class were successful men eagerly sought after by employers. A much larger second group was comprised of men “of capacity, but whose personalities do not so clearly reveal that capacity.” As an example of this type of student, Dwinnell wrote:

“I have one man whose case concerns me very much. He is graduating from College at the age of 26, and he worked 4 years between the grammar and high schools...He came to Harvard and majored in English Literature with a better than average standard, but he still speaks the language of the small town machine-shop. Harvard may have deepened his understanding of English literature, but superficially he is just what he was four years ago. In no outward respect is he a college man. He has sought four opportunities [through placement] unsuccessfully...It is the men in this group that constitute the real placement problem. They are not the type of men the average employer has in mind when he says he wants college men.”²⁴⁹

Academic achievements notwithstanding, this was a working-class student who would never be a “college man,” and the placement office was wary of recommending him. A third category of men, according to Dwinnell, was made up of poor students whom the placement office would simply not help, students who really “should have gone to work directly after leaving high school and never gone to college at all.” In other words, not only would these students never be “college men,” but Dwinnell seemed to imply that a college education had been wasted on them. The placement office could not help them, he explained, because “The office of service is finally going to be sold, not by

²⁴⁸ Lauren Rivera’s fantastic ethnography of campus recruitment of Harvard students by elite corporate firms critically examines these pathways in the present; her conclusions are similar to those I draw in an earlier period. Lauren A. Rivera, *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015). Some studies make very brief mention of placement services, including: Pamela Walker Laird, *Pull: Networking and Success since Benjamin Franklin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 153–54; Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940*.

²⁴⁹ J. F. Dwinnell, Proceedings of the Meeting of the Associated Harvard Clubs, June 1930, Harvard Alumni Bulletin, p. 33, Box 30, Folder: Alumni Placement Service, Harvard, General Printed Matter, OCS.

advertising, but by the men placed.”²⁵⁰ These students would threaten the carefully cultivated reputation of Harvard’s placement office. Rather than make a sub-par recommendation, placement officers would state that they did not have anyone who fit the bill. To the Excelsior Insurance Company, Dwinell wrote: “While we have one hundred or so men registered [in that area], frankly there is not one of them whom I care to suggest to you.”²⁵¹ The Harvard placement office was thus careful to help employers find exactly who they were looking for, including their class, racial, and ethnic preferences, to improve their reputation as a source of graduates.

In the 1920s, a new measurement craze among educational reformers also extended to placement services and personnel managers, although it ran up against limits. A.D. Wilt Jr., one of the most active alums in promoting the placement office, encouraged the office to create “route charts” mapping training trajectories for each occupation to be used in consultation with students.²⁵² Some employers asked for tests to be administered to prospective students before they would make a decision on whom to interview.²⁵³ Harvard placement offices also experimented with systems of rating and ranking candidates: in 1920 the Harvard Business School placement service created a “Rating Card” for each student, ranking them on personality, industry, common sense, reliability, initiative, cooperation, and native ability, as well as particular fit for different types of business activities. However, by 1930 there was renewed skepticism around these forms of standardization in placement work. At the Business School, ratings were found “unreliable” and the employer interviews largely replaced them.²⁵⁴ Some placement officers rejected route charts, as “companies do

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 34.

²⁵¹ Letter from J. F. Dwinell to Robert Hosmer, September 26, 1936, Box 36, Folder: Excelsior Company of New York, OCS.

²⁵² “Report of 31st Meeting of Associated Harvard Clubs, May 1929” Box 30, Folder: Alumni Placement Service, Harvard, General Printed Matter” OCS; A. D. Wilt, Jr. to A. L. Putnam, February 15, 1930, Box 48, Folder: Wilt, A. D. Jr., OCS.

²⁵³ Letter to Donald Moyer, Jan. 5, 1939, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Company, OCS.

²⁵⁴ Melvin Thomas Copeland, *And Mark an Era: The Story of the Harvard Business School*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), 293.

not agree” on the best route to success.²⁵⁵ Standardized systems of measurement were too restrictive, squeezing out room for personal evaluation. Of course, this personal evaluation could also become another means of concealing prejudice. In 1926, President Lowell helped pass new admissions procedures that would increase consideration for “character” alongside academic records, widely seen as a means of restricting the number of Jewish students at the college.²⁵⁶ Standardized practices were useful, but not when they hindered flexibility to evaluate on all levels.

The reputation of the firms to which their graduates belonged was also important in placement calculus. When a Philadelphia firm, Waldo Adler & Company, expressed interest in hiring Harvard graduates to become salesmen, Dwinnell first consulted with another Philadelphia firm, “Would you be willing to express an opinion...as to whether this firm is one with which Harvard graduates...would find a good opportunity, or whether it is one to which it would be better for us to offer no encouragement?”²⁵⁷ When consulting firm William O. Lichtner Associates reached out to the placement office, the officer wrote to a colleague: “What information have you on this group?...Are they reliable or inclined to be ‘sales promotion?’” The colleague reassured him that “the firm is entirely reliable.”²⁵⁸

The pathways from elite universities to leading firms strengthened over time. Each alum in a new firm established a bridge between that firm and the college, and once alumni moved into executive positions, they often favored their own alma mater. Between 1896 and 1939, the American Telephone and Telegraph hired between one and fourteen Harvard graduates per year, and became

²⁵⁵ A. L. Putnam to A. D. Wilt, Jr., May, 23, 1930, Box 48, Folder: Wilt, A. D. Jr., OCS.

²⁵⁶ Karabel, *The Chosen*, 90–110.

²⁵⁷ Waldo Adler to George Plimpton, July 18, 1935; J.F. Dwinnell to S. M. Felton, October 24, 1935, Box 31, Folder: Adler, Waldo, and Company, OCS.

²⁵⁸ Note, September 24, 1934; Letter to Mr. Sage, September 1934, Box 39, Folder: Lechtner Associates, The Wm. O., OCS.

the largest employer of college graduates in the United States in the 1920s.²⁵⁹ Henry Dennison, a Harvard graduate, preferred hiring Harvard graduates and in the early 1920s was part of the Alumni Employment Committee that helped establish Harvard's alumni placement office on a permanent basis.²⁶⁰ In 1930, John Hancock Life Insurance wrote to express appreciation and continued interest in the placement service: "In view of the fact that a number of Harvard graduates have been and are now members of the sales staff of this Agency, and that at least two of this number were originally referred to us through your office, this is to inform you that we will be most interested to interview others who might qualify for work of this sort."²⁶¹ Through the 1930s, Kendall Mills regularly filled their positions in market research with Harvard graduates, and "have become accustomed to a high order of work carried on with the minimum of supervision."²⁶²

Employers benefited from easy access to a ready supply of employees with their desired characteristics, not only saving search costs, but also gaining the prestige and connections that college graduates could bring to their firms. At the same time, most college graduates had very little experience in the actual practice of working in, let alone managing, a business. As college graduates grew as a percentage of business employees, many of the largest firms restructured their internal training procedures to accommodate this lack of experience. Many created entirely distinct "tracks" and training programs for college graduates, which started at the bottom at a low salary and would rotate through departments before promotion to a managerial role.²⁶³ At Lever Brothers, college graduates started as "messengers" before their promotion to administrative offices or sales

²⁵⁹ "College Men in the Bell System with Degrees from Harvard University, 1896-1939," Box 31, Folder: American Telephone and Telegraph Company, OCS.

²⁶⁰ "Dennison Mfg. Co." February 20, 1934, Box 35, Folder: Dennison Manufacturing Company; "Harvard Placement Service, September 26, 1926, Box 30, Folder: Alumni Placement Service, Harvard, General Printed Matter, OCS.

²⁶¹ Frank Bobst to Miss Mork, May 2, 1930, Box 39, Folder: John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance, OCS.

²⁶² H. A. Secrist to J. F. Dwinell, April 22, 1937, Box 39, Folder: Kendall Mills, Bauer and Black, OCS.

²⁶³ Economists such as Paul Osterman have examined and theorized the structure of internal labor markets, but focus on dynamics within the firm, rather than connected these structures to the different labor pools they draw from. Paul Osterman, *Internal Labor Markets* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1984).

departments. In the early 1930s, Proctor and Gamble developed a year-long salesmanship training course for future division managers, and a pre-foremanship training course that groomed college graduates into factory superintendents.²⁶⁴ As college graduates were hired in order to be promoted to management, they quickly surpassed less-educated employees into executive positions.²⁶⁵

This structure of employee training and promotion helped shape a particular composition of managers. First, the starting salaries of college graduates were low; even future executives typically started on the factory floor or at the bottom of the office hierarchy.²⁶⁶ On the one hand, this policy continued longstanding apprentice practices in business. Through the first decades of the twentieth century, Edwin Gay noted, “There were businessmen who held on to the old-fashioned idea that the only way to learn business is to start by sweeping out the office.”²⁶⁷ This practice also lowered company costs, a concern especially after the Great Depression. As the Yale and Towne Manufacturing Company explained, “an experienced man is very apt to be looking for a position at a higher salary...we have obtained our best results...by starting young people and teaching them our business, graduating them to the positions of larger responsibility at higher salary.”²⁶⁸ On the other hand, this policy also had the effect of weeding out students from lower-class backgrounds that would not be able to afford to live in Boston on such a small income. In correspondence with Filene’s Sons Company, the placement officer noted that one prospective employee “questions whether he can afford to accept employment in Boston for as little as you are prepared to offer

²⁶⁴ Proctor and Gamble Distributing Company Card November 7, 1930; February 28, 1933, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Co., OCS.

²⁶⁵ Landers, Frary and Clark Company, for instance, made it clear that they were only looking for employees that would be promoted, otherwise they would be released: “If we do not find such [promotional] capacity, we would release him, even though he might be doing a particular job excellently, because I am looking rather to the future than to the immediate present.” R. L. to Mr. Moyer, October 31, 1936, Box 39, Folder: Landers, Frary & Clark, OCS.

²⁶⁶ The United Carr Fastener Corp general manager required candidates for sales positions to first “work in factory in overalls indefinitely before going out to sell.” “United-Carr Fastener Corporation,” March 24, 1937, Box 55, Folder: Employers – Boston, OCS.

²⁶⁷ “Better Chances for Young Men Seen by Dean Gay of Harvard Business School” *Boston Daily Globe*, March 25, 1917, 25.

²⁶⁸ Richard Plumley to Donald H. Moyer, July 18, 1938, Box 48, Folder: Yale and Towne Mfg. Co., OCS.

him.” Two other candidates, however, “are local boys and I assume are interested.”²⁶⁹ From vocational surveys of graduates in the 1920s and 1930s, a large proportion if not a majority of Harvard graduates lived at home with parents immediately after college.²⁷⁰ Some companies like the consulting firm Lichtner Associates expected their new employees to be “able to support himself for a time,” assuming assistance from parents or savings.²⁷¹ Like a nineteenth-century apprenticeship or a modern-day unpaid internship, being able to forgo a livable income was a fee of entry into the most desirable jobs.

This structure of employee promotion was also a way to build and test loyalty. Employers pitched a low salary as a meritocratic means of proving oneself as worthy. The Employers Group explained: “This is a pioneering work and everything depends upon the progress the young man makes. We are willing to start them in on what we call a livable wage and from there on it’s up to the man himself.”²⁷² Waldo Adler and Company preferred “entirely green” graduates for salesmen, who would serve a six to seven-year-long apprenticeship on a commission basis before earning a salary.²⁷³ Adler was one of many employers who sought students fresh from college, and did not want graduates out for more than one or two years or who had previously worked for their competitors.²⁷⁴ Some eager employers like Proctor and Gamble developed summer internship programs for college

²⁶⁹ Donald Moyer to Charles E. Barry, April 18, 1940, Box 36, Folder: Wm. Filene’s Sons Co., OCS.

²⁷⁰ Box 90, Folder: Commercial Banking; Box 92, Folder: Advertising; Box 93, Folder: Manufacturing; Folder: Sales, OCS.

²⁷¹ The Lichtner (Wm. O.) Associates Card, January 10, 1933, Box 39, Folder: Lichtner Associates, The Wm. O., OCS.

²⁷² Harold T. Young to J. F. Dwinnell, August 7, 1936, Box 36, Folder: Employers’ Group, The, OCS.

²⁷³ As Adler explained, this was a way to avoid teaching men special knowledge and “then have him capitalize this by walking next door for a small salary in addition to commission.” Waldo Adler to George Plimpton, July 18, 1935, Box 31, Folder: Adler, Waldo, and Company, OCS.

²⁷⁴ Proctor and Gamble sought engineers “out of school one year, not more than two years.” F. G. Atkinson to Mr. Sage, March 10, 1936, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Company; see also Richard Plumley to Donald H. Moyer, July 18, 1938, Box 48, Folder: Yale and Towne Mfg. Co., OCS.

juniors and seniors, explicitly as a way to recruit dependable workers fresh from college.²⁷⁵ In these ways, college graduates came to form a distinct stratum of the new corporate elite.

Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration

In 1900, University of Chicago President Edmund James praised new efforts by universities across the country to introduce “higher commercial education,” since “our higher institutions of learning will be able to maintain their relative position in the community at large only by performing all the functions which may be legitimately expected of them.”²⁷⁶ As Eliot and professors at Harvard observed the success of new endeavors in business education, a contingent of faculty supported a graduate-only professional school that could help transform business into a true profession.²⁷⁷ Initial plans for a Harvard school of diplomatic service and public administration were scrapped when A. L. Lowell, who had left the Boston School Committee in 1899 to become professor of government at Harvard, and F. W. Taussig, professor of economics, helped convince President Eliot that a school of business administration was more practical and necessary.²⁷⁸ Ongoing labor strife and cyclical panics in the early twentieth century, especially the Panic of 1907, drew attention to the importance of proper business management among the same progressive reformers instrumental in legal and educational reform, including businessmen Edward Filene, Henry Dennison, and attorney

²⁷⁵ As F. G. Atkinson wrote to J. F. Dwinell in 1936, “We are considering offering summer employment this year to a limited number of undergraduates who will complete their academic work in June, 1937. It is hoped, of course, that men so employed will qualify for permanent places in our organization after graduation.” May 4, 1936; Proctor and Gamble Company Card, March 24, 1937, Box 43, Folder: Proctor and Gamble Company, OCS.

²⁷⁶ “In Joint Sessions Historical And Economic Associations Unite,” *Boston Herald*, Dec. 29, 1900, 9.

²⁷⁷ The Wharton School of Finance and Commerce of the University of Pennsylvania was the first degree-program in business in the country, offering a Bachelor of Science in Economics degree in 1881. Bossard, *University Education for Business*, 153.

²⁷⁸ Cruikshank, *A Delicate Experiment*, 32–34.

Louis Brandeis.²⁷⁹ These reformers believed that as long as business suffered from low repute among intellectual elites, it would be plagued by mismanagement; however, if business were to be put on a scientific basis and guided by the ethical ideal of service, it could become, in the words of Henry Dennison, the “newest and possibly the greatest profession.”²⁸⁰ In 1908, the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration opened to college graduates offering a two-year Masters in Business Administration, with courses including accounting, commercial contracts, economic resources, banking, and finance, taught by reformist economics professors and part-time businessmen.²⁸¹ Edwin F. Gay, professor of economics and the newly appointed Dean, was “convinced that there is a scientific method...underlying the art of business,” and initially was drawn into the orbit of Frederick Taylor, who was brought in regularly to lecture.²⁸² By Taylor’s death in 1915, however, management education shifted towards attention to the “human factor” and personnel management.²⁸³ The Harvard Business School (HBS) adopted a variation of the law school’s case method, and launched a Bureau of Business Research in 1911 to undertake detailed

²⁷⁹Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard, 1636-1936*, 471.

²⁸⁰ “What the Employment Department Should be in Industry,” April 2-3, 1917, Henry S. Dennison Papers, Box 1, f. 30, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA; Khurana, *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands*, 46, 111–21. Brandeis shared this optimism in his 1914 book, *Business: A Profession*, in which he described innovative management practices, like Filene’s Cooperative Association, that pointed toward a more harmonious industrial order. Louis D. Brandeis, *Business: A Profession* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1914).

²⁸¹ This school was also the model on which Course XV at MIT was based several years later. Cruikshank, *A Delicate Experiment*, 41–50; Katherine Clark Harris, “The Rise and Fall of the Practical Man: Debates Over the Teaching of Economics at Harvard, 1871-1908” (Senior Thesis, Harvard University, 2010). “Mechanic Arts High Criticised,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 15, 1910, 4.

²⁸² Cruikshank, *A Delicate Experiment*, 54.

²⁸³ David Nelson has characterized Harvard Business school, and university business education, as unequivocally promulgating Taylor’s scientific management, but as Cruikshank points out, there was tension between Taylor’s vision and Gay’s vision from the start. Taylor wrote to Gay in 1913: “I have no doubt that a great deal of good will come from your school, but I very much doubt whether most of the men who graduate...will ever become men capable of scientific management. Many of them may ultimately become good managers.” Again, the difference between technical engineers and personable managers and executives is revealed by Taylor’s characterization. Business school students as early as 1911 were turned off by the phrase “scientific management,” since its “advocates have made extravagant claims as to their efficiency in reducing the expenses of railroad operations, and so on.” As Sanford Jacoby describes, the influential Society for the Promotion of Scientific Management (later the Taylor Society) after Taylor’s death in 1915, with members including Henry Dennison, moved toward a vision of management that combined efficient management with progressive social ideals that fueled the personnel management movement. Nelson, *A Mental Revolution*, 88; Cruikshank, *A Delicate Experiment*, 56–59, 78; Sanford M. Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in American Industry, 1900 - 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 102.

investigations of business operations across the country, through which the school made itself known to employers. An Advisory Committee of businessmen in 1912 strengthened its ties to corporate leaders in the region.²⁸⁴

From the start, assistance with the placement of graduates was a central feature of HBS. Through employer contacts, the dean and faculty of the school assisted students informally.²⁸⁵ Firms who had developed a relationship with the college alumni placement office began recruiting from the business school as well.²⁸⁶ By 1917, Dean Gay touted that there was “a bigger demand for our graduates now than we can fill.”²⁸⁷ Citing increased enrollment and business demand, subsequent Dean Dorham launched a placement office in 1923.²⁸⁸ Even more so than college graduates, business school graduates went into the financial sector: by 1929, 40% of each graduating class entered positions in banking and finance, the majority as investment bankers.²⁸⁹ Based on correspondence between the HBS placement office and employers, the types of personal and academic characteristics employers looked for were similar to those sought among undergraduates.²⁹⁰ Even more so than the college placement office, however, HBS was selective in whom it chose to recommend. Noting the problem of placing graduates with unsatisfactory academic records, Dean Dorham decided that the placement office from day one would help only

²⁸⁴ Cruikshank, *A Delicate Experiment*, 60–74.

²⁸⁵ Copeland, *And Mark an Era*, 291.

²⁸⁶ These included campus recruiting visits, starting in 1914. *Ibid.*, 295.

²⁸⁷ “Better Chances for Young Men,” *Boston Daily Globe*, March 25 1917, p. 25

²⁸⁸ Copeland, *And Mark an Era*, 291. In the next years, HBS placement officers conducted a series of visits to meet proprietors and employment managers of firms in cities across the United States. “Los Angeles – C. P. Biddle” April 15, 1932; “Los Angeles Placement,” February-March 1933; “Worcester” 1937; “New York Trip,” February, 1938; Folder: “Trips by School Staff for Placement Office 1932-1946,” Placement Office Records, Harvard Business School Archives, Baker Library, Harvard University.

²⁸⁹ Box 2, Vol. 8: “Placement Stats from 1929-1939,” Placement Office Records, Harvard Business School Archives, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA. The high proportion of graduates going into banking and finance would drop and be replaced by manufacturing after the financial crash of 1929, only rising again after the 1960s.

²⁹⁰ “Trips by School Staff for Placement Office 1932-1946,” Placement Office Records, Harvard Business School Archives, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

highly qualified students.²⁹¹ Even with this exclusive policy, by the mid-1920s the HBS placement office was the primary way its graduates found employment. Out of the 139 members of the graduating class of 1926 who pursued employment upon graduation, 57% were placed by the employment office.²⁹²

Regulating Institutions of Business Training

As in the field of law and education, Harvard positioned itself at the top of a rapidly expanding field of institutions. Harvard not only cultivated its reputation through curricular reform, new professional programs, and placement services, but also shaped the evolution of other business schools. Gender was perhaps the most dramatic demographic shift occurring in business training institutions in this period, and shaped elite reactions. As we saw in Chapter Four, women students drove the expansion of proprietary schools between 1890 and 1920: turning Bryant and Stratton Commercial School and Comer's College into majority female institutions by 1905 and filling the vast majority of newly founded commercial schools and public commercial courses.²⁹³ Not only did Charles Eliot disparage proprietary schools, but he considered emerging female-dominated public commercial courses as mere supplements to a "defective elementary education," and "they seldom train anybody for service above that of a clerk."²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ As Dorham described, "men who by the quality of their work and the impression which they made on their associates in the School affirmatively demonstrate the right to such assistance, leaving to other men to find their own positions." Copeland, *And Mark an Era*, 293.

²⁹² Placement Statistics 1926-1929, Box 1, Vol. 1, Placement Office Records, Harvard Business School Archives, Baker Library, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

²⁹³ *Report of the Commissioner of Education* (Washington D.C: GPO) 1880-1910; *Biennial Survey of Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1920-30.

²⁹⁴ Eliot, "Commercial Education," 417.

After the turn of the century, Harvard supported selected philanthropic and public efforts that offered business training exclusively to men. Eliot backed the public male-only High School of Commerce in 1906, and supported the male-only YMCA evening school of commerce. In 1911, the same year that Suffolk unsuccessfully petitioned for power to grant law degrees, the YMCA, favored by Boston elites, won the legal right to grant the degrees of Bachelor of Commercial Science and Masters of Commercial Science. In the hearing on House Bill 1463, the proposed YMCA school received the strong endorsements of Dean of Harvard Business School Edwin F. Gay, Superintendent of Schools Stratton Brooks, Massachusetts Commissioner of Education David Snedden, and Boston Chamber of Commerce Education Committee Chairman James P. Munroe. These supporters argued that the YMCA evening school would not supplant, but supplement, the public High School of Commerce and the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration.²⁹⁵ In the next decade, the YMCA school offered programs in Professional Accountancy and Business Administration, enrolling between 600-800 male students annually, who were primarily salesmen, bookkeepers, and bank clerks in their late twenties preparing to pass the state exam for Certified Public Accountants.²⁹⁶ In the school's promotional catalogs, they touted their status as the third largest collegiate business institution in the country by 1915, and claimed in 1921 that more of their students had passed the CPA exams than those from all other accounting schools in the state combined.²⁹⁷ They contrasted their collegiate, professional training with the preparation for mere clerks and bookkeepers in proprietary business schools and high schools: "In choosing a life career

²⁹⁵ Monroe and Gay would also be on the Board of Directors of the newly incorporated school. "House Bill #1463 1911" School Commerce and Finance Records, 1910-1927, Box 1, Northeastern University Archives & Special Collections, Northeastern University, Boston, MA.

²⁹⁶ "Corporation of the School of Commerce & Finance, Minutes, 1910-1922" School Commerce and Finance Records, 1910-1927, Box 1, Northeastern University Archives & Special Collections, Boston, MA; *School of Commerce and Finance Catalogue 1914-15* (Boston: YMCA, 1915), 9.

²⁹⁷ In 1913-14, the largest school (by enrollment) was the NYU School of Commerce, Accounts and Finance, enrolling over 2,000 students, and second was the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, enrolling 700. *School of Commerce and Finance Catalogue 1914-15* (Boston: YMCA, 1915), 11; *Catalogue of the School of Commerce and Finance, 1920-1921* (Boston: YMCA, 1921), 6.

if a man's aspirations do not reach beyond the work of a bookkeeper or office clerk then the preparation offered by business schools and the commercial departments of high schools may suffice. If, however, he aspired to become a specialist in business, the training for which should be as complete as that required for law, engineering, or medicine, he should secure his preparation from some institution of college grade."²⁹⁸ While proprietary schools would continue to attract students—and it is a testament to the demand for business skills that many survived without degree-granting power until well into the twentieth century—they also declined in status and lost many students to alternative programs that offered the prestige of a degree.²⁹⁹

While public high schools became the predominant pathway for women into clerical and sales work after WWI, college-educated women also rapidly entered the field of business. While teaching remained the dominant professional path for women college graduates, by the late nineteenth century there was growing interest in alternative women's business professions, especially since the status of public school teaching was waning and the business world held out possibilities for high status, higher paying positions in mixed-gender environments.³⁰⁰ The Women's Education and Industrial Union, which had founded the earliest women's placement bureau in 1878 to help all women seeking work, shifted its focus to women college graduates in 1909.³⁰¹ In 1910 the appointment bureau secured a new director, Laura Drake Gill, who was also president of the newly formed Associations of Collegiate Alumnae representing women's colleges across the country.³⁰² Gill worked with an advisory committee of placement officers from Radcliffe, Wellesley, Simmons,

²⁹⁸ *School of Commerce and Finance Catalogue 1914-15* (Boston: YMCA, 1915), 9-10.

²⁹⁹ Fisher College, for instance, was only granted the ability to grant Associate of Science degree in 1957; Bryant and Stratton began to offer bachelors degree in 2000.

³⁰⁰ Carole Srole, "A Position That God Has Not Particularly Assigned to Men?: The Feminization of Clerical Work, Boston 1860-1915" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984), 550-88; Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

³⁰¹ This shift in focus was described in Chapter Two.

³⁰² "The Worker and the Chance to Work," *Boston Daily Globe*, May 8, 1910, p. 46

Smith, Mount Holyoke, and the Women's College of Brown to help place college women in positions "other than teaching."³⁰³ Through this national network, the WEIU appointment bureau developed connections to firms and built a reputation for their services more than a decade before their male college counterparts achieved the same level of coordination.³⁰⁴ While the WEIU bureau launched dozens of vocational studies of professions for women they hoped to promote, the employment paths of graduates were restricted.³⁰⁵ While the rare female college graduate became a proprietor herself, in large firms women typically reached the position of secretary or mid-level manager (usually managing other women) while remaining subordinate to male executives.

Specialized college degree programs aspired to elevate, but in practice "demarcated," the position of secretaries, stenographers, office and department store managers as women's professions.³⁰⁶

Simmons College, founded in 1902, offered women degrees in Household Economics, Library Studies, General Science, and Secretarial Studies. In 1913, Simmons absorbed the Lucinda Prince School of Salesmanship, which pivoted from training saleswomen, a comparatively low-status

³⁰³ "History of the Appointment Bureau," Box 8, Folder 66, p.7, Women's Educational and Industrial Union (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1894-1955, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

³⁰⁴ The ECPO was only formed in 1926, and its male organizers were wholly oblivious to the prior advances in placement services pioneered by women, including the National Association of Appointment Secretaries founded in 1924 by female directors of appointment offices across the country. See Letter from Miriam Carpenter to Walter Daly, September 21, 1926, Box 1, Folder: Eastern College Placement Officers, General Correspondence, Graduate School of Education Placement Office Records, Harvard University Archives, Harvard University. Subsequent studies of college placement have also ignored the prior role of college women, starting their histories with the ECPO in 1926, such as *The Fundamentals of College Placement: History, Philosophy, and Operational Techniques Associated with the Modern College Placement Office* (Bethlehem, PA: The College Placement Council, Inc., 1962).

³⁰⁵ These studies included actuarial work, chemistry, home economics, law, laboratory technicians, publishing, psychology, statistics, and social work. However, based on placement records, the vast majority of college graduates took positions as secretaries, stenographer, and teachers. Box 10-11, Folders 106-163 Occupations, Women's Educational and Industrial Union Records, 1894-1955; Box 9, Folder: A.B. College Placements, October 1911-December 1914; January 1919- December 1921; January 1922-February 1925; Women's Educational and Industrial Union, Additional Records, 1877-2004, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

³⁰⁶ Again using Witz' terminology. "Witz, "Patriarchy and Professions," 682.

women's occupation which suffered from lack of enrollment at the college level, to training for the new profession of educational managers in department stores and salesmanship teachers.³⁰⁷

New business degree-programs at Boston University, a co-ed institution, exemplified the way new business programs offered women opportunities, while at the same time were designed to enhance the reputation of the institution and primarily advantage male students. In 1910, several BU alums were concerned by the high number of female students enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts, and its reputation as a "girl's college." They organized the "More Men Movement" that promoted a new, evening, collegiate business school to attract more men to the university. BU's College of Business Administration (CBA) opened in 1913 to 234 men and 40 women, offering courses in accounting, business organization, economics, law, English, and modern languages toward a Bachelors of Business Administration degree.³⁰⁸ This college quickly became the highest enrolled at BU, and for a time it did have the desired affect on BU's gender balance. In 1920, while BU's College of Liberal Arts had 220 men and 500 women, CBA enrolled 1,122 men and 634 women. The number of women in CBA was rising, however, and just as Harvard and BU had done with their education programs, BU used new policies to control the gender ratio. In 1917, BU created a female-only Secretarial Science department within CBA, and in 1919 this department became a separate School of Secretarial Science, the only exclusively female college at BU. The school had the desired effect of siphoning off a significant proportion of female business administration students.³⁰⁹ While this school was initially publicized as a training program for female

³⁰⁷ Helen Rich Norton, *Department-Store Education: An Account of the Training Methods Developed at the Boston School of Salesmanship Under the Direction of Lucinda Wyman Prince*, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, No. 9 (Washington: Washington G. P. O., 1917), 49–52.

³⁰⁸ This argument dovetailed with a financial crunch that led BU to pursue new curricular offerings to attract higher enrollment. Eleanor Rust Collier, *The Boston University College of Business Administration, 1913-1958* (1959), Boston University Archives, Boston University, Boston, MA; Hilda McLeod Jacob and Maine State Library, "Rev. Everett William Lord Correspondence," Maine Writers Correspondence, Paper 320 (2015); Kilgore, *Transformations*, 97–100.

³⁰⁹ "Twenty-Four Girls Will Be Secretaries," *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb 11, 1917, p. 8; "First Class in Secretaryship," *Boston Daily Globe*, June 17, 1923, p. 2.

executives, it soon billed itself as the ideal school for the “perfect secretary.”³¹⁰ Just as female high school students sought out commercial courses, many college-bound women sought out secretarial training to enter the highest positions in business available to them. Simultaneously, however, each institution calculated their specific programs with an eye to how it would shape the gendered, ethnic, and class demographics of their student body and the reputation of their institution. Figures 5.11 and 5.12 illustrate the comparative enrollments of men and women across the landscape of Boston.

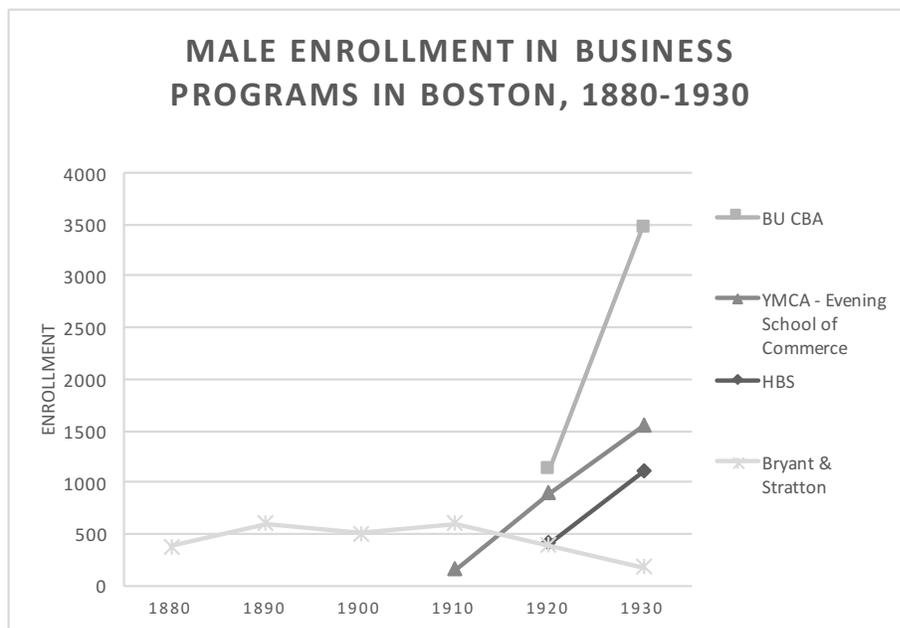


Figure 5.11

Sources: *Report of the Commissioner of Education*, 1880-1910; *Biennial Survey of Education*, 1920-30.

³¹⁰ BU initially advertised the new Secretarial Science School: “For young women who wish to be business executives,” and the school’s Dean declared “They are looking at the executive’s chair,” but within several years the tone had changed. See “We Want to Go to college,” *Boston Daily Globe*, September 26, 1920, p. E7; “Did Anyone Ever See One?: ‘Perfect Secretary,’ as Experts Describe Her,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Nov. 4, 1923, p. A3; “Secretaries-to-be Told of Their Power,” *Boston Daily Globe*, March 13, 1924, p. 24. In 1924 BU’s School of Secretarial Science changed its name to the School of Practical Arts and Letters, offering a Bachelors of Science in Practical Arts in addition to a Bachelor of Secretarial Science. “College of Secretarial Science Changes Name,” *Boston Daily Globe*, April 24, 1924, p. 14

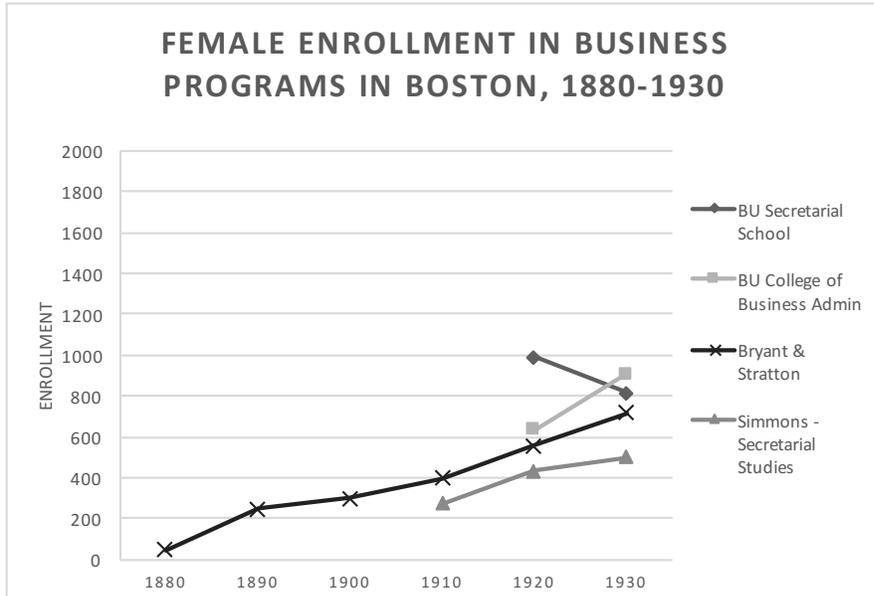


Figure 5.12

Sources: Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1880-1910; Biennial Survey of Education, 1920-30.

As these graphs show, men's colleges and university enrollment surpassed their enrollment in the largest commercial school by 1910, while commercial schools still catered to women before their college counterparts offered equivalent opportunities.

In 1880, the business hierarchy had been structured by the informal familial and social networks that connected young people to informal apprenticeships within leading firms. After 1920, schools were the institutions that linked students to employers and reproduced this hierarchy under a guise of merit and expertise. The burgeoning institutional landscape of proprietary business schools provided access to a growing number of women, middle-class students, and ethnic minorities into the burgeoning world of business. Even more so than men, women students drove the expansion of business education, seeking technical skills, cultural behaviors, and access to social networks and placement services. The expansion of business schools from the bottom up provoked a reaction among elite universities and colleges, who founded their own degree-programs and sought to make a liberal arts collegiate education the preferred credential for business leaders. Colleges and

universities cultivated ties to elite employers, and through placement services helped shape the reputation of credentials from their particular institution. This reputation was not only based on the quality of training provided, but the racial, ethnic, and gendered traits of the student body. Colleges and universities also sought to shape the world of business training by bolstering their favored schools and controlling access to degree-granting power. Through these strategies, colleges and universities structured an increasingly differentiated credentialed hierarchy that fed into distinct strata of the business world.

Conclusion

The cases of law, education, and business demonstrate the contested path toward school-based professional training. In sectors of the economy that were growing and profitable, there was widespread demand for training, driving the expansion of proprietary schools led by educational entrepreneurs. These schools provided tangible skills that proved advantageous for many on the labor market. They also provided access to social networks that facilitated employment for their graduates. Importantly, however, they proved successful only to the extent that the labor market was open to their graduates. As the power of immigrants through the Democratic Party in Boston grew, new immigrant groups were able to gain entry to the bar as a practicing attorney, or employment in the public schools. In the case of business, employers hired women for restricted positions in the business hierarchy, and employer needs for certain skills - especially scientific knowledge – sometimes overcame employer prejudices. However, in all these cases, the success of schooling was limited by the gendered, racial, and class hierarchies in the labor market.

Within these limits, as proprietary and public schools helped new populations enter the professions, they also provoked elite practitioners, as well as traditional colleges and universities, to

pursue new strategies of control. Internally, these institutions reformed their curricula, set new admissions and degree requirements, developed placement services that cultivated networks of employers through alumni. Externally, these institutions worked with professional associations and the state to monitor, regulate, and set standards for the broader field of training, boosting the institutions that they preferred, and hindering their competitors: evening law schools, the public Normal School, and proprietary business schools. Through these professionalizing projects, elite universities and their professional allies helped promote a credentialed hierarchy within each profession. Their own institutions provided a pathway into the most lucrative tiers of the professions: corporate law, educational administration, and top business managers and executives. Women's colleges, the public Normal School, and proprietary professional schools provided access into lower rungs of the professional hierarchy. As each of these institutions aspired to achieve degree-granting power and conform to the new standards of prestige set by elite universities, they helped generate more rungs on an increasingly elaborate professional ladder.

Conclusion

In order to understand the evolution of American social inequality, we must look at the historical transformation of pathways to work. I argue that educational credentials became profoundly important to the structure of social opportunity by shaping access to the most lucrative occupations. The rise of a credentialed hierarchy, however, did not occur in the 1970s, or even with the expansion of higher education in the middle of the twentieth century. Rather, this hierarchy was consolidated in the progressive era, when social mobility became inextricably linked to education, materially and ideologically. Rather than take the expansion of a vast and differentiated structure of formal education in the United States for granted, my dissertation poses it as a question. How did schooling come to be so important in structuring social opportunity, when, in the nineteenth century, it was marginal to employment for the vast majority of workers?

I begin this story by exploring pathways into different sectors of employment across the occupational structure of Boston in 1880. A skilled aristocracy of artisans and a few professions retained formal apprenticeships, but most learned their work informally on the job after receiving a common school education, as described in Chapter One. In the next decades, school-based job training offered an alternative to this predominant model, but met both success and failure in different sectors. Occupational training programs for the lowest paying and lowest status jobs, such as domestic worker schools described in Chapter Two, simply failed to attract students. In the industrial sector, the subject of Chapter Three, schools were a threat to the power of exclusive craft unions that, while keeping their trades closed to many outsiders, regulated the training process as well as the terms of employment of their members. Strong union opposition and the limited success

of trade schools thus drove a “race to the bottom” in industrial training. Instead, employers were encouraged to develop mass-production strategies that could mold their labor force to be more compatible with short periods of on-the-job training and longer periods of general education in schools: machine operatives, white-collar workers, and a small number of engineers and managers. In the meantime, schools that provided education for the fastest growing sector of white-collar jobs – clerks, stenographers, sales workers, secretaries, and managers—proved immensely popular and faced little organized opposition, the topic of Chapter Four. While the absence of opposition in this sector meant that “outsiders” including women and immigrants could find new opportunities for employment, this absence was also a symptom of the relative lack of protections or regulations of most of these jobs. As education for white-collar training grew, schools competed with one another for students and their own graduates competed with each other for employment, driving a “race to the top” in educational credentials. As described in Chapter Five, professional elites developed even higher credentials to consolidate their control of the most lucrative jobs at the top of an ever-more elaborate managerial and professional ladder. Thus, the triumph of school-based training also came with an overall shift in the employment structure to jobs with less craft-based power. This new, credential-based structure of social inequality was bolstered by an ideological commitment, forged through this process, to education as a means of social mobility.

This story was not simply a Boston story. Instead, it characterized the new corporate industrial economy of the Northern United States. The decentralized local governance and universal white manhood suffrage in northern states had fostered high levels of common school enrollment after the Civil War, setting the stage for the expansion of secondary schooling in the late nineteenth

century.¹ Urban progressive reformers across the United States turned to educational strategies and used school systems—the most well developed public institutions—to provide a range of social services. Industrial training was discussed nation-wide: in rural areas with a focus on agricultural education, in cities with a focus on the trades. In cities like Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and San Francisco, strong craft unions opposed private trade schools and restricted public industrial training.² Across the U.S., the overall failure of political coordination between employers, organized labor, and the state in regulating an industrial training regime was an important factor in encouraging industrialists to reduce their reliance on craft workers by reorganizing their firms into mass production industries. Larger mechanized firms reduced the proportion of artisans relative to immigrant factory operatives and school-trained native-born white-collar staff.³ The spontaneous growth of proprietary commercial schools was a nation-wide phenomenon, and public high schools expanded even more dramatically in Western states, which channeled the highest percentage of their

¹ This development was extremely regional: the South, characterized by a coercive labor regime with powerful white landowners and African American sharecroppers, had extremely low levels of public education for either blacks or whites; the Northeast had the highest enrollment and greatest number of public primary schools by the late nineteenth century, followed closely by the Midwest. Nancy Beadie, *Education and the Creation of Capital in the Early American Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Nancy Beadie, “Toward a History of Education Markets in the United States: An Introduction,” *Social Science History* 32, no. 1 (2008): 47–73; Richard Rubinson, “Class Formation, Politics, and Institutions: Schooling in the United States,” *American Journal of Sociology* 92, no. 3 (1986): 519–48; Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Macmillan, 1983); Pamela B. Walters and Philip J. O’Connell, “The Family Economy, Work, and Educational Participation in the United States, 1890-1940,” *American Journal of Sociology* 93, no. 5 (1988): 1116–52. James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Christine Trampusch and Dennis C. Spies, “Agricultural Interests and the Origins of Capitalism: A Parallel Comparative History of Germany, Denmark, New Zealand, and the USA,” *New Political Economy* 19, no. 6 (November 2, 2014): 918–42.

² Ira Katznelson, *Schooling for All: Class, Race, and the Decline of the Democratic Ideal* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 150–77.; Charles Henry Winslow, *Industrial Education: Report of Committee on Industrial Education of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1912).

³ Sanford M. Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in American Industry, 1900 - 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Hal Hansen, “Caps and Gowns: Historical Reflections on the Institutions That Shaped Learning For and At Work, 1800-1945” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1997); Kathleen Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Margarita Estevez-Abe, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice, “Social Protection and the Formation of Skills: A Reinterpretation of the Welfare State,” in *Varieties of Capitalism: Trajectories of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

workforce into office and sales work.⁴ In response, elites across the country pursued higher credentials as a professional strategy of control. While the dominance of private colleges and universities was a unique feature of the Northeast, the expansion of new collegiate business and professional programs occurred across the country.⁵ Northeastern universities and professional practitioners dominated early professional organizations that forged national networks and shaped an emerging set of national standards.

In a comparative perspective, many features of this American story were unique. Compared to European countries, the U.S. educational landscape was unusually decentralized and unregulated, which allowed for a high degree of responsiveness to local demand and local labor markets, fueling private educational ventures as well as high levels of public education. The same lack of regulation, however, fostered forms of job control based on exclusion, limited to “skilled” elites, dependent upon political and economic power. While German “handwerker” artisans initially had tight legal control of skill certification in late nineteenth-century Germany, subsequently German employers and social democratic unions forged a cross-class alliance to create a new state-regulated system of training that granted mutual control of the training process.⁶ Control of training in the U.S., by contrast, was the central source of power to nineteenth-century craft unions. This control was subsequently undercut in the U.S. through the vast expansion of school-based training in the twentieth century, also a uniquely American phenomenon. The U.S. craft-based “skilled aristocracy” of the late nineteenth century gave way to the new professional “scientific experts” of the twentieth century, who continually lengthened the credentialed ladder that controlled entry into the most

⁴ John L. Rury, *Education and Women's Work: Female Schooling and the Division of Labor in Urban America, 1870-1930* (New York: State University of NY Press, 1991).

⁵ On the popular support for state universities in Western states, see Scott M. Gelber, *The University and the People: Envisioning American Higher Education in an Era of Populist Protest* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

⁶ Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve*.

lucrative occupations. This explains how, in the U.S., a comparably open and accessible system of education could also co-evolve with an occupational structure with limited job control for all but a highly educated elite.⁷

This new narrative can also help explain the particularly strong ideology of education as social mobility in the U.S. Far from “mere” ideology, this faith in education is based on material reality and lived experience. Indeed, contemporary research reveals the persistent, unique importance of education to job prospects in the United States.⁸ My dissertation suggests that this importance is rooted in the historical success of many who used schools – especially public high schools—to access white-collar work, as well as the triumph of educational credentials as a means to access the highest occupations in the early twentieth century, as opposed to apprenticeship, licensing, or vocational educational certification.⁹ A particular national focus on educational solutions in the U.S., however, has also helped obscure a highly stratified occupational structure, lack of social protections, and job insecurity that remain some of the distinctive features of the American economy.

Subsequent twentieth century developments would seem to counter this narrative. The “Great Compression” of the mid-twentieth century was characterized by the rise of industrial unions

⁷ David Hogan, “‘To Better Our Condition’: Educational Credentialing and ‘The Silent Compulsion of Economic Relations’ in the United States, 1830 to the Present,” *History of Education Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1996): 243–70; Marius R. Busemeyer, *Skills and Inequality: Partisan Politics and the Political Economy of Education Reforms in Western Welfare States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Daniel Markovitz, “Snowball Inequality: Meritocracy and the Crisis of Capitalism” (Workshop on the Political Economy of Modern Capitalism, Harvard University, December 1, 2014).

⁸ See, for example, David H. Autor, “Skills, Education, and the Rise of Earnings Inequality among the ‘other 99 Percent,’” *Science* 344, no. 6186 (May 23, 2014): 843–51.

⁹ David Baker theorizes the self-legitimizing and reinforcing role of educational credentials for work in what he calls the “schooled society.” He describes “horizontal institutionalization” as the use of education as a credential for access to more and more jobs, and “vertical institutionalization,” or intensification of the use of educational credentials that replace other forms of occupational access like labor unions. David P. Baker, *The Schooled Society: The Educational Transformation of Global Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); David P. Baker, “Forward and Backward, Horizontal and Vertical: Transformation of Occupational Credentialing in the Schooled Society,” *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 29, no. 1 (January 2011): 5–29.

and new social protections through the federal welfare state that helped reduce social inequality. However, rather than reverse the earlier structure of credentialed inequality, these gains helped shield many men and women workers from their full effects. Their foundations were perhaps more precarious than contemporaries, and scholars since, have imagined. Through the twentieth century, formal education continued to grow, and just as secondary education became a majority youth experience by the 1930s, college education was on its way to becoming a majority experience by the 1970s. By this time, when the collective power of workers and social protections came under attack, the relative importance of formal education that had been growing all along was newly amplified as a means of structuring unequal social opportunity.

How does this new narrative speak to different social science frameworks? Perhaps the most popular view of the relationship between education and the economy is human capital theory as developed in the discipline of economics. My dissertation validates several key components of this approach. First, I argue that students did in fact acquire real skills that translated into higher earnings on the job. Second, on an institutional level, I also agree with economic historians who theorize educational markets in the United States on a model of supply and demand. Grassroots demand did play a key role in driving the expansion of commercial and public educational institutions.

My dissertation, however, also makes clear the limitations of the human capital approach to education and labor markets. Human capital is measured as the increase in wages derived from additional “skills” acquired through education. The wage differential between unskilled wage and skilled wage is the “skill premium,” or the monetary benefit derived from acquiring additional human capital. This conceptualization sets up a functionalist relationship between education and wages: wages reflect the inherent skill-level of the job. First, this definition of “skill” is problematic, as it reflects a historically constructed value of different types of work rather than the actual “skills”

required.¹⁰ Second, human capital theory conflates the many forms of training through which skills were acquired, and who controlled them, which historically determined the populations who could access and benefit from this training. It mattered if training was acquired through an apprenticeship regulated by a craft union, a proprietary school controlled by an educational entrepreneur, a public school controlled democratically by the state, or a private university controlled by an educational and professional elite. Third, human capital theory conflates the different kinds of “skills” that might prove beneficial on the job. Among different forms of technical knowledge, some proved far more useful and successful than others. While industrial and housekeeping schools suffered low enrollment, commercial training proved exceedingly successful. Finally, schooling cannot simply be reduced to technical knowledge, as human capital theory implies, but includes a wide range of cultural and behavioral knowledge (gender norms, middle class habits, cultivated tastes, and social skills) as well as the social networks to which schools could provide access. The all-encompassing term “human capital” thus obscures how formal education intersected with structures of inequality.

Human capital analyses of the origins and evolution of social inequality also tend to oversimplify the role of education in the economy. The decline in social inequality in the mid-twentieth century, according to human capital economists, was to a large extent due to the rapid rise in human capital acquisition through education that outpaced skill-biased technological change.¹¹ The solution to rising inequality in the current moment, therefore, is more education. But this story

¹⁰ Domestic service is “unskilled” only if one ignores the actual process of learning the many skills required to cook, clean, launder clothes, and wait on wealthy patrons. This is the central thrust of many studies of work, such as Mike Rose, *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker* (Penguin, 2005); Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk about What They Do All Day and How They Feel about What They Do* (New York: New Press, 1974).

¹¹ This is the central thesis of Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F Katz, *The Race Between Education and Technology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); More recently, Peter Lindert draws on Goldin’s thesis to stress the important role of education in Peter H. Lindert, *Unequal Gains: American Growth and Inequality since 1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); While war-time “shocks” are more central to Thomas Piketty’s account, he too claims that “the best way to increase wages and reduce wage inequalities in the long run is to invest in education and skills.” Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 313.

overlooks several factors. The overall movement of training from workplaces to schools was an important transformation that, in the U.S., helped erode previous forms of worker power and shifted the economy towards jobs with less workplace power. Rather than conceiving of technological change and education as moving along separate parallel tracks, I argue that they interacted with each other to shape a particular occupational structure that favored a labor force with school-based credentials. Today, the expansion of education without corresponding protections for workers on the job may simply perpetuate the polarization of the economy, in which a greater number of highly educated workers are competing over a narrow set of jobs at the very top. Recent studies have demonstrated that even educational equality can be compatible with high social inequality, as school-based formal education is no guarantee of a “good” job.¹² Rather than a magic bullet, education has only ever been one of many factors in reducing social inequality. The mid-century expansion of access to free education also took place in conjunction with range of political and economic factors, including rising union power, employment regulations, and state-provided social protections, in addition to the “shocks” of the Great Depression and World Wars.

My dissertation also speaks to a wide range of sociological theories of stratification through schooling. Scholars working in the tradition of Pierre Bourdieu have theorized the role of cultural capital acquired in schools in maintaining and perpetuating class distinctions. I have found that school-based training did offer its students the ability to acquire cultural capital, which for some working class youth enabled social mobility, and for others perpetuated their elite class position. Sociologists have also described the ways schools provide access to key social networks. I have also found this to be the case, and have illustrated the central role of placement bureaus in both providing connections to graduates who would not otherwise have personal connections, and,

¹² Busemeyer, *Skills and Inequality*, 181–85.

among elite institutions, cultivating and consolidating control among an elite social group. While many studies of these networks detail these operations in the present, my dissertation contributes a historical analysis of the process of stratification.

Finally, this dissertation speaks to a body of political science scholarship on the comparative political economy of skill formation. I make use of the conceptual framework of “liberal” and “coordinated” market economies and focus on political conflict and coalitions between major social groups and political constituencies to explain the development of particular systems of training. Through a richer historical analysis on a local level, however, I am able to illuminate important facets glossed over in previous studies. Most importantly, I highlight the neglected role of “vocational” education for white-collar jobs. While previous historical studies of skill formation in the United States focus on industrial education and federal-level industrial education policy, I argue that the more important national development was the vast expansion of commercial education, largely carried out by secondary schools at the local level. This distinction is an important corrective to studies that classify forms of education as either vocational/industrial, or liberal/academic, often characterizing liberal economies in the U.S. and UK as having an exclusively academic educational system. According to these scholars, the “failure” of liberal economies to develop a vocational education system is responsible for their higher rates of social inequality.¹³ As I have argued, what was historically “liberal” education was in fact principally vocational education for white-collar jobs, which suggests that a lack of occupational training was not a distinguishing feature of the U.S. political economy. Rather, its distinguishing feature was lack of regulation that would have enabled a

¹³ This is the argument of political scientists such as Mark Busemeyer, who claims: “The reason [vocational education and training, or VET] is so important with regard to inequality is that it opens up access routes to high-quality training and well-paid employment for individuals in the lower half of the academic skills distribution, who have little chance of being admitted to tertiary academic education. The decline of VET in liberal skills regimes, often accompanied by an increase in private education spending, has contributed to a polarization of skills and income on the labor market...In contrast, countries with well-established VET systems and a predominance of public financing have significantly lower levels of socioeconomic inequality.”

mutually beneficial industrial training regime to develop. The repeated calls for a pivot to industrial training on the model of Germany or Scandinavia made today echo those made in the nineteenth century.¹⁴ We should learn from our history that, without a sufficient regulatory apparatus, a training regime, and its effects on the national political economy, cannot be generated by educational supply alone.

My dissertation also offers several important insights for contemporary U.S. educational and labor policy. The fastest growing schools and their curricula in the U.S. since the late nineteenth century have tended to follow the most profitable and high-status occupations. This means, first, that efforts to reshape the economy simply through the provision of vocational education for jobs that have low prestige and low pay is a limited strategy. Second, this historical fact has important implications for debates over the purpose and function of colleges and universities today. Many lament the “vocationalization” of higher education and corporatization of the university, often dating this process to the 1970s.¹⁵ A historical perspective suggests that vocational demands and the corporate world have shaped universities for over a century. It also suggests that casting aspersions on the vocationalism of contemporary students reflects a narrow definition of education, which for the vast majority of students since the late nineteenth century was a way to access better employment. Historically, this demand was only met with the sufficient provision of free or

¹⁴ This is the approach taken by many education scholars, such as: Nancy Hoffman and Robert Schwartz, “Gold Standard: The Swiss Vocational Education and Training System” (Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy, 2015); Robert B. Schwartz, “The Career Pathways Movement: A Promising Strategy for Increasing Opportunity and Mobility,” *Journal of Social Issues* 72, no. 4 (December 1, 2016): 740–59; Nancy Hoffman, *Schooling in the Workplace: How Six of the World’s Best Vocational Education Systems Prepare Young People for Jobs and Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2011). A plethora of articles in popular journals also make this case: Nicholas Wyman, “Why We Desperately Need to Bring Back Vocational Training in Schools,” *Forbes*, September 1, 2015; The Hechinger Report, “Vocational Training Misses Mark in Many Countries,” *U.S. News & World Report*, November 18, 2014; Harold Sirkin, “What Germany Can Teach The U.S. About Vocational Education,” *Bloomberg*, April 29, 2013.

¹⁵ Ellen Schrecker, *The Lost Soul of Higher Education: Corporatization, the Assault on Academic Freedom, and the End of the American University* (New York: New Press, 2010); Elizabeth Popp Berman, *Creating the Market University: How Academic Science Became an Economic Engine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); William Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2014).

inexpensive public educational opportunities. In addition, scholars within universities cannot afford to ignore the economic bases of their own positions, which are also increasingly threatened.

A historical, and comparative, perspective reveals that the solution does not simply require catering to the contemporary labor market as it exists. Different political economies developed different occupational hierarchies, and in the U.S., the value placed on different types of skills in the economy has been high when these jobs and occupations have organized economic and political power. The relative economic value of different types of skills and different forms of work—from academic historical research to women’s domestic labor—are and can be shaped by politics and political strategies for building up the collective power of workers.

By broadening our analysis of the contemporary economic landscape to include politics and power, I also hope to reorient contemporary thinking about the role of technology and technological change. Concern with the prospect of new labor-saving technologies is not primarily over the merits of the services they will provide (although this may be a separate debate), but rather with the possibility that they will displace workers from their jobs, given the limited social and economic protections that come with employment in the United States.¹⁶ Here again, a historical analysis suggests that this is a political question, rather than the inevitable outcome of technological processes. Some commentators call for renewed investment in education and re-training programs, although, as I have argued, this approach may be far from sufficient.¹⁷ A widely discussed proposal is

¹⁶ For a recent study that finds evidence for this displacement, see Daron Acemoglu and Pascual Restrepo, “Robots and Jobs: Evidence from US Labor Markets,” Working Paper (National Bureau of Economic Research, March 2017).

¹⁷ David Autor argues: “the issue is not that middle-class workers are doomed by automation and technology, but instead that human capital investment must be at the heart of any long-term strategy for producing skills that are complemented by rather than substituted for by technological change.” David H. Autor, “Why Are There Still So Many Jobs? The History and Future of Workplace Automation,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 29, no. 3 (August 2015): 3–30. Education is also one of the primary solution proposed by economist Erik Brynjolfsson, *Race against the Machine: How the Digital Revolution Is Accelerating Innovation, Driving Productivity, and Irreversibly Transforming Employment and the Economy* (Lexington, MA: Digital Frontier Press, 2012). Other authors express skepticism, suggesting that even the work of the

a universal basic income, which could not only counter the effects of technological change, but could also mitigate the growing precarity of contingent labor and compensate for unpaid labor.¹⁸ As technological change threatens an unprecedented re-organization of the economy, the ways in which new forms of human labor are remunerated and valued will depend on political organization.

The history of pathways to work alerts us to some of the strategies that may prove to be successful. By describing the process of the erosion of craft union control, I do not mean to suggest that a return to early craft unions is possible or desirable. Craft unions and professional associations were (and are) both guild-like organizations that derive their power from their ability to exclude. Rather, the inclusive model of industrial unions, based on organizing workers across skill-level, offers a more promising model of building workplace power and more broadly shared prosperity. While industrial unions are typically associated with the golden era of manufacturing in the mid-twentieth century, they were pioneered in an earlier period, in cities like Boston, among female and immigrant garment workers, city employees, and service workers. The fastest growing service sector occupations at present—domestic workers, health care workers, teachers—are leading new organizing efforts to tip the balance of power back towards employees.¹⁹ These workers are also at

most educated professionals are undergoing automation: Richard E. Susskind, *The Future of the Professions: How Technology Will Transform the Work of Human Experts* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁸ This is the proposal suggested by authors such as Martin Ford, who is much more skeptical of the possibilities of education and re-training: Martin Ford, *Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015). See also: Andy Stern, *Raising the Floor: How a Universal Basic Income Can Renew Our Economy and Rebuild the American Dream*, First edition. (New York: Public Affairs, 2016).

This debate opens up a space for rethinking the value of “work” entirely, suggested by feminist theorists such as Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), and a burst of recent work on “post-capitalism”: Nick Srnicek, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2015); Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016); Sarah Leonard and Bhaskar Sunkara, *The Future We Want: Radical Ideas for a New Century* (New York, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2016).

¹⁹ Hina Shah and Marci Seville, “Domestic Worker Organizing: Building a Contemporary Movement for Dignity and Power,” *Albany Law Review* 75, no. 1 (2011): 413; Rich Daly, “Unionization Surges in Health Care,” *Healthcare Financial Management Association*, January 29, 2016; Tamar Lewin, “More College Adjuncts See Strength in Union Numbers,” *The New York Times*, December 3, 2013; Michelle Chen, “Teachers Will Be a Formidable Force Against Trump,” *The Nation*, March 8, 2017.

the core of local community organizing and political mobilization efforts across the country.²⁰ The rise of right-wing populist leaders and the current political climate certainly complicates this process. But in the U.S., policies such as raising the minimum wage, tuition-free college, single-payer health care, and even the term “socialism,” have, in recent decades, attracted considerable popular support.²¹ In navigating the landscape of political possibility today, a historical understanding of the evolution of the American political economy, and the constitutive role of schooling in its development, may offer some guidance. Understanding the possibilities and full consequences of the American faith in education will be essential in future efforts to halt spiraling social inequality.

²⁰ Isaac Park, “Chicago Teachers Join with Fight for 15 and Black Lives Matter in One-Day Strike,” *The American Prospect*, April 1, 2016; Sarah Leonard, “Housekeepers Versus Harvard: Feminism for the Age of Trump,” *The Nation*, March 8, 2017; Michelle Chen, “Immigrant Workers Are Already Fighting Back Against Trump,” *The Nation*, January 24, 2017.

²¹ Ariel Edwards-Levy, “Raising The Minimum Wage Is A Really, Really Popular Idea,” *Huffington Post*, April 13, 2016; Tom Anderson, “College Should Be Tuition-Free, 60% of Americans Say in Survey,” *CNBC*, August 1, 2016; Frank Newport, “Majority in U.S. Support Idea of Fed-Funded Healthcare System,” *Gallup*, May 16, 2016; Catherine Rampell, “Millennials Have a Higher Opinion of Socialism than of Capitalism,” *The Washington Post*, February 5, 2016.

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